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Modern fanaticism unveiled

James Lenox.

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MODERN FANATICISM

UNVEILED.

MODERN

FANATICISM

UNVEILED.

—— δὶ ἀλήθειαν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος,
Καὶ δὶ ἐυσέβειαν ἡ πραγματεία.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
WESTLEY AND DAVIS,
STATIONERS'-HALL COURT.

MDCCCXXXIV.

LONDON:

Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke-street, Lambeth.

PREFACE.

It is not of the smallest moment to inquire who is the writer of these pages: "*Non quis sed quid*," is the sole query which we aim to provoke. Our object is not disguised. Taking a deep interest in the rise and progress of religion in the minds of young, ardent, and inexperienced converts, our observation has of late been frequently and painfully exercised upon the thickly multiplying forms of temptation, artfully concealed beneath the garb of religion, by which, in the present day, such persons are unconsciously assailed at the very outset of their Christian course. No sooner have they drawn the breath of spiritual life,—

and ere time has been allowed them to derive nutriment from "the sincere milk of the word," and to acquire incipient strength and stability of constitution—than these babes in Christ are hurried into some noxious atmosphere, or made to partake of unwholesome and pernicious aliment, whereby their system is debilitated, and a foundation is laid for that moral malady whose symptoms are discernible in the weak, vacillating, restless, and error-stirring spirit that now prevails in a particular section of the professing world.

To guide the recently-awakened mind in its pursuit after truth; to guard the impetuous against the wildness of enthusiasm; to assist the timid, who, in their hesitancy, scarcely "know to refuse the evil and choose the good;" and to press upon the candid inquirer the force of that inspired aphorism, so applicable in this age of conflicting opinions—"The prophet that

hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: *What is the chaff to the wheat?* saith the Lord;" these are the ends designed by this little volume; and whatever be the meed of notice or neglect which may be awarded to it by an impartial public, a hope is entertained, that the secret prayer of faith which follows it into the world will not return without some fruit of usefulness, though it be but a single sheaf to bind into the happy bosom of the reaper.

It has been impossible, from the very nature of the subject, to avoid the mention of certain names in connexion with the several heresies of the times; but though care has been taken to speak in measured terms of the revivers of some ancient and long-forgotten hallucinations, yet there can be no hesitation as to the propriety of reprobating, to the utmost extent,

those evils which we are unfeignedly concerned to find in connexion with them. "Whatever moderation or charity," says the amiable Bishop Burnet, "we may owe to men's persons, we owe none at all to their errors, nor to the frame which is built on and supported by them."

1*st December*, 1830.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The continued demand for something in the shape of an antidote to various false opinions of the day, together with the fact, that such opinions, when repressed by the force of truth in one quarter, are found to break out with epidemic contagiousness in other and remote localities, render it expedient to issue a Second Edition of this little work, which, on its first appearance, was received by the public with a degree of approbation quite unlooked for by the obscure individual who penned it.

As usefulness is the object originally proposed and still contemplated, it is deemed advisable to expunge some of those passages which may be dispensed with, without injury to the

arguments under each topic, more especially such as are either inapplicable to the present state of things, or incongruous with the existing position of individuals. By this means the volume will be reduced in size; and, from its appearing in a cheaper form, may more easily find its way among an intelligent class of Readers, whose means are small, but whose temptations to imbibe the leaven of unsound doctrine are perhaps equal to, if not greater than those of persons moving in a higher sphere.

With this view, the whole of the Introductory Chapter has been omitted. A few verbal alterations have likewise been made in accordance with the suggestions of those able and candid Reviewers, to whose obliging notices the former Edition owes much of its acceptance.

March 7, 1834.

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MODERN FANATICISM
UNVEILED.

Chapter I.

ON ASSURANCE.

"The free-born Christian has no chains to prove,
Or, if a chain, the golden one of love;
No fear attends to quench his glowing fires,
What fear he feels, his gratitude inspires."

It is peculiarly delightful to follow the religious inquirer in the first stages of his illumination—to mark how zealously he is affected towards every iota of what he conceives to be the revealed will of God, and how joyfully he slakes his thirst at the well of life that has just been disclosed to his astonished view. A new prospect has opened before him:—he is become the subject of a class of emotions, unknown, unfelt, before:—he looks around, and wonders, why every one does not think as he thinks, and realize what he enjoys. Little

aequainted with the extent of that spiritual disease, the cure of which is already begun in his experience—and still less aware of the subtle and ofttimes sacred guises in which temptation lurks

> ——— "to work us woe and shame,
> By sly assault,"

he admits no suspicion of danger, where nought is seen but safety, holiness, and bliss. Every cup that is given him in the name of the Lord, he readily concludes must be a cup of blessing; and who can wonder, if, in his yet unchastened eagerness, he become the recipient of some of those delcterious admixtures which are so copiously and gratuitously supplied by the fanatical empiries of the day?

There is no point of modern controversy more likely to arrest the thoughts and captivate the affections of a neophyte in religion, than that of *assurance*, a doctrine clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures; and concerning which, it may justly be affirmed, in words connected with another article of belief, that it is "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves

the workings of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things." Indeed, it is apparent from the apostolic writings and experience, that if believers are destitute of the strong consolation of assurance, it is owing, not to any defect in the inspired testimony, but (if it be not produced by something morbid in their physical temperament) arises either from incorrect views of the gospel, or half-heartedness in the profession of it, whereby the free and full influence of the truth is impeded, and its corresponding confidence impaired.

Having thus freely admitted that assurance is a scriptural and highly valuable attainment, let us enter a little into an examination of the primitive and legitimate acceptation of the word *assurance*, as used in the New Testament; guarding, as we proceed, against the mistaken representations, whereby many have been made to swerve from sound doctrine, and to realize what the poet has so elegantly expressed:

> ———" From out the self-same fount,
> One nectar drank, another draughts of gall."

The word in the original (πληροφορία) imports *full persuasion*, or *certain knowledge;* and, in its application to faith, is used to express the entire confidence of the mind, in reference to that which is the object of belief. It occurs seven times in the New Testament, either as a substantive or verb, in a sense capable of general application, besides twice in a more restricted connexion, 2 Tim. iv. 5 and 17. The first instance occurs:

Luke i. 1. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of these things which are *most surely believed* (πεπληροφορημένων) among us:" the meaning of which is, that the events already recorded by others, and of which the evangelist Luke was here prefacing the summary contained in his gospel, were accompanied with such abundant evidence as carried *a full measure of conviction* to the minds of the writer and his fellow believers. The assurance, then, specified in this passage, has for its object the testimony concerning the life, character, death, resurrection, &c., of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in no wise refers to the subject of *personal interest* in

those great facts. Such an assurance of personal interest would involve a reflex act of the mind, passing from the facts themselves to its own state, as affected by them. Now we readily admit—nay, we strenuously maintain—that such are the nature and properties of faith, that when it lays hold of the gospel testimony it conveys to the soul, by a moral influence, the benefit of the truth believed, so that the soul, in believing, has, of necessity, an individual interest in it, whether a happy consciousness of the privilege be enjoyed, or not; and what God hath thus joined must, on no account, be put asunder. But though the facts proposed to our belief are unquestionable, because they are the subjects of divine testimony—and though the effect of our believing is equally indisputable, because it is testified, that "he who believeth shall be saved,"—yet the *reality* of our *personal belief* is nowhere attested in the written record, and is, therefore, a question remaining to be examined on evidence, and decided, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, according to those divine rules of self-judgment, with which our Heavenly Father has

most graciously furnished us, that we might not walk in comfortless darkness, as to our actual state, but know, assuredly, whether we are in the faith. The question, whether a consciousness amounting to assurance be not warranted on the *immediate* reception of the truth, before the mind have instituted any process of investigation into the quality of its own emotions, will be taken up in its proper place. Suffice it, here, to observe, that, however primitive converts might feel assured of their own salvation, they were not unhesitatingly credited upon their own bare *ipse dixit*, without any further evidence, as may be seen in the instance of Saul, Acts ix. 26.

The next passage referred to is Rom. iv. 21. "And being *fully persuaded* (πληροφορηθεὶς) that what He had promised, he was able also to perform." The assurance here expressed has reference to the power of the Most High, and, abstractedly considered, has no moral virtue; for the devils have an undoubting conviction of the omnipotence of Jehovah, which produces in them nothing but trembling apprehension. The saving efficacy is not in the

principle of assured belief, but in the objects which it embraces. A full persuasion of the power of God is a blessing only in so far as we have an enlightened conviction, that that divine attribute is engaged on our behalf—but with this concurrent, personal assurance our text has nothing to do.

Rom. xiv. 5 is the next in order to be considered; it reads thus: Let every man be *fully persuaded* (πληροφορείσθω) in his own mind," and is simply an exhortation to believers, to examine carefully the conscientious scruples which prevailed respecting days and meats, that they might arrive at a clear, definite, and consistent conclusion respecting what was lawful, and so regulate their practice as to avoid violating conscience by conformity to forbidden, or questionable usages. This is a persuasion widely different from what, in popular phraseology, is termed personal assurance, and therefore it might be dismissed without further notice; but we cannot pass it by, without animadverting on a too common abuse of this apostolic precept. In the connexion in which it stands on the sacred page, it is appli-

cable only to things of *divine appointment*, and for this reason, we cannot but regard the paraphrase, "let every man freely enjoy his own sentiment," as a false and dangerous gloss upon the passage. An interpretation so latitudinarian, may be justly reprobated, as quite incompatible with the restraints of "the law and the testimony."

To guard against the misappropriation of this text, let us consider, that many individuals have a *full persuasion* of the mind, which, nevertheless, is a *wrong persuasion*, and that, in fact, it can scarcely be otherwise, if they regard not the revealed will of God, in the matter of their persuasion; hence this portion of Holy Writ is inapplicable to laws and ceremonies of human invention, which never can be objects of faith, even of the lowest order; since faith must always have respect to some divine warrant, either expressed in the counsels, or embodied in the example of our Lord and his inspired Apostles.

We come now to Col. ii. 2, where the Apostle speaks of "*the full assurance* of understanding"—(τῆς πληροφορίας.) This assur-

ance consists in a clear, full, comprehensive, and influential perception of revealed truth, in its nature, the relation of its several parts, and the bearing of the whole system upon the divine glory, and the happiness of the lapsed race of man. It is a most desirable grace produced by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and is the very core and substance of maturity, stability, and fruitfulness, in the divine life. The supplies by which it is nurtured are in Christ; for "in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It is of gradual growth in the soul, advancing from *understanding* to *assurance* of understanding; thence to *full* assurance of understanding; and, finally, to its consummation, in *all riches* of the full assurance of understanding. The believer who is just starting for the goal would do well to remember, that though conversion is an instantaneous change, it is not the work of an hour, or a day, but of much time and patient effort, to reach the sublime heights of spiritual knowledge and christian excellence. How disgusting it is, to see new converts stepping forth from the rank of learners, and dictating to

those far more advanced in piety, with a forwardness and pertinacity alike unbecoming the humility of the Gospel, and the very limited measure of their acquirements in the school of Christ. No zeal for the propagation of faith—even though it be faith in the miracles of Gareloch—can justify a violation of the modesty that should characterize a novitiate in the science of religion; and when young ladies go from house to house, with their Bibles in their hands, teaching their elders in the faith, what they have just learned—not from the humble, prayerful reading of those Bibles—but—from some "goodly creature,"* the inventor of some modern nostrum for the cure of all manner of mental sobriety: and when, as we have witnessed, they account the very individuals, who successfully prayed and laboured for their conversion, blind and unbelieving, because they expect a heaven above, and not a heaven on earth—these incongruities excite a conflict of feeling between the ridiculous and the solemn, the indignant and the sad, which finds no relief but in commending those, whose folly

* Morning Watch, No. vii. p. 546.

has occasioned it, to the care and conduct of an all-powerful and unerring Guide, by whose agency alone they can be restrained from following one, or other, or all, of these *ignes fatui*, which are seen dancing over the putrescent corses of heresies long ago inhumed, but now brought up again to the surface of the earth, and beguiling many an unwary traveller from the "old paths," which will ever be found "the good way" of safety and of peace.

The censures here expressed are not intended to fall on that large and amiable class of females, whose time and strength are spent in visiting from house to house, as distributors of tracts, or collectors of money for Bible or other religious associations. Many young ladies are thus employed, who, feeling the *danger* and *delicacy* of the undertaking, engage in it with unaffected diffidence and prudent caution. They mount not into a chariot made after the pattern of Jehu's; neither do they re-echo the cry, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord!" Their step is gentle and prayerful; and when they find an opportunity of speaking to a fellow-immortal of the love of Jesus, their sound

doctrine drops as the rain, and their unobtrusive speech distils "as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." But though there is abundant reason to commend the objects they have in view, and the remarkable discretion with which those objects are daily pursued, (discretion no less obvious than the superintending care of Divine Providence over the individuals referred to;) yet we cannot derive from the mere circumstance of modern usage, an argument sufficiently powerful to stifle our conviction, that the work of indiscriminate domiciliary visiting ought to be devolved on other hands than those of young unmarried women, or indeed of any females who have not attained to such matronly age and experience, as will warrant a more unrestricted agency in the walks of public beneficence. The much absence from home, which it necessarily involves, is contrary to apostolic precept (Tit. ii. 5); and the unavoidable contact into which it must, occasionally, bring the mind with disgustful indications—not alone of human wretchedness—but of profanity and licentious-

ness, should make every parental heart shrink from the voluntary exposure of a young, untainted imagination, even to the casual influence of such an atmosphere. The female character cannot be robbed of its *retiring* element without danger of substituting boldness in the place of bashfulness, and a spirit of dictation in lieu of those milder attributes which Christianity sanctions, as alone consistent with the legitimate sphere of female influence. But we have digressed almost beyond bounds. Let us now proceed to examine

1 Thess. i. 5, where the Apostle Paul says, "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in *much assurance*," (πληροφορία.) If personal assurance had been intended here, we should have had some such reading as this: 'in much assurance of your individual interest in it.' Paul was no illogical writer, nor was he the man to disguise any truth, because it might be unpalatable to prejudiced hearers. It is just, therefore, to conclude, that no such idea was intended, and that no ellipsis of the kind

is couched in the phraseology of the text, the unsophisticated meaning of which is, that the evidence of the truth of the Gospel was borne in upon the minds of the Thessalonian converts, with irresistible energy, like that of a vessel in *full sail*, impelled onward, by wind and tide, to its destined haven.

In Heb. vi. 11, we find this expression; "the *full assurance* (πληροφορίαν) of hope unto the end." It is evident, that it is not to the weak, unsettled expectation of the mere professor of religion, nor to the foundationless fabric reared by Antinomian daring, that we are to look for the counterpart of these words, which form a graphic description of the well-grounded, firm, unshaken hope of the true believer. In regard to the object of this hope, it appears, from the context, (ver. 9.) to have respect to personal salvation; but, as hope, however steadfast and unwavering, is still hope—distinct from the confidence of security—it cannot be necessary to say more in proof that this passage does not refer to the kind of assurance which we have in view.

The seventh and last quotation, referred to,

is Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart, in *full assurance* (πληροφορία) of faith," &c. This is expressive of faith in its greatest strength, and most vigorous actings; or, in other words, "an undoubting faith, a fulness of faith, which leaves no room for apostasy, or scepticism."* Here, again, we have not the assurance of personal salvation, but a full persuasion, or confidence, of the truth of the Divine testimony, concerning the way of access to God, and the nature and effects of Christ's priestly office. The person who exercises full assurance of faith in these fundamental truths, is indeed in a most favourable state for realizing the sweet consciousness of his interest in all the blessings which that principle, even in its lowest degree, insures to the soul;—but, we are not to confound "things that differ," but to "compare spiritual things with spiritual;" and lest we mistake a rhapsody for a sound conclusion, it behoves us to see whether our title to the heavenly inheritance have a being, in substance, or only in the ideal creations of our own brain. A full persuasion concerning

* M. Stuart.

what God has declared, is not only warranted, it is a duty imperatively binding on me: but the belief that I am a believer, is either a blessed privilege, or a fatal delusion, according as it is founded in truth, or suggested by the lying policy of Satan.

Thus it has been shown, by a critical and careful investigation of the above seven instances, in which the word πληροφορία occurs, that in no one of them does it bear the meaning of assurance, in the sense of the mind's moral certainty of its own state, as pardoned, justified, and saved.

But we set out with an assertion, that there is such a thing as assurance of this kind, and that it is founded in scripture truth, and replete with comfort to the godly: Let us now redeem the pledge contained in that assertion, by proving the truth of it. 1 John ii. 3. "*We do know* that we know him." iii. 14. "*We know* that we have passed from death unto life." iii. 19. "*We know* that we are of the truth, and shall *assure our hearts* before him." iii. 24. "*We know* that he abideth in us." iv. 13. "Hereby *know we* that we dwell in him, and

he in us." v. 13. "That ye *may know* that ye have eternal life."

Here is a mass of evidence which speaks for itself. Look at it, ye trembling saints, whose piety is never doubted by your fellow-christians, though your own timid spirits almost fear to cry, Abba, Father! lest your faith should be found a lie, and your hope a delusive dream. Look at it, we say, again, and see whether you ought not to reciprocate the love of God to your souls, by exercising a livelier, firmer confidence in his invitations, and in the exceeding great and precious promises of his grace. Have you never yet been in possession of the Pilgrim's "roll," which was "the assurance of his life, and acceptance at the desired haven?" or, are you in the condition of poor "Christian," when "he felt in his bosom for his roll, that he might read therein and be comforted; but he felt, and found it not," for he had lost it by the way? Rest not, dear friends, till you obtain the boon; or, if lost, till you recover the enjoyment of it. Be not content to live so far below the happiness which you may derive from reading your "title clear to mansions in the skies."

But what, you anxiously ask, are the legitimate means of acquiring such blessed assurance? Do you expect a reply that shall set you upon seeking it by some doings of your own; some course of fasting, and prayer, and alms, and holy living, with a seven years' probation of your religious character, in order to qualify you to taste these grapes of Eshcol, the earnest of your future inheritance? How was it with the primitive believers? We read of their "gladness;" and that they walked in the "comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and "praised God;" and went on their way "rejoicing." Whence this immediate perception of their interest in the love of God? For it is evident that they did realize their own part in it, otherwise they would have walked in darkness and distrust. Its cause is easily explained: Those early Christians "staggered not at the promise through unbelief," but received the word with a firm conviction of its truth; a full persuasion of its rich, free, superabounding grace; and an intense feeling of its value and suitableness to themselves. Thus they not only "saw" the promises, and "were per-

suaded" of them, but "embraced them" as their own; and found, in the Gospel, every thing they wanted, every thing they could desire. And what do ye need, O ye humble seeking souls, that you may not obtain from the same source? Is it *pardon?* "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Is it *justification?* "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Is it *sanctification?* "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Is it *adoption?* "I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is it *assistance?* "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." Is it *consolation?* "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Is it *assurance of final triumph?* "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" "Who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—We might enlarge abundantly; but, in conclusion, be exhorted to study those emphatic words of our dying Lord, *It is*

finished;—for there is enough in that one sentence, rightly understood, and taken home to the heart, to dispel all your unbelieving fears, to make the chains fall off your spirit, and to introduce you into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

There is another class of persons, destitute of assurance, whom we may denominate comfort-hunters, because their main concern is to obtain an inward witness of the love of God to their souls, and an unclouded perception of their election to eternal life, while, at the same time, they are not careful to maintain that close walk and constant communion with God, with which genuine christian comfort is inseparably connected. They are not hypocrites; but they take their stand on the lowest grounds of Christianity; and, there, with scarcely an effort to gain the higher regions of experience, they sigh for comfort, and they sigh in vain. Were we to form our judgment of the road to heaven by the temper of these travellers, we should be apt to think (as an old divine once said concerning Hell) that it is paved with lazy wishes. Friends, whilst it is thus with

you, we cannot give you comfort; rather, we are glad that you have no assurance. Slightly to heal over the wounds which require probing, cauterizing, perhaps the amputation of a limb, would be no better than mockery, and deception of the most fatal kind. If, then, you would have well-grounded confidence towards God, see that the great truths which you profess to believe have their corresponding influence upon your character. Learn to rejoice when your corruptions are mortified; and suspect, yea, very much suspect, the quality of that assurance which blunts your regrets for sin, or gives you a mitigated view of its "exceeding sinfulness." Endeavour to ascertain the cause of your fluctuating, and ofttimes disconsolate frames; and when divine grace unveils to your view the malignant nature of inherent depravity, not merely as it is superficially regarded, and confessed *en masse*, but as it evinces itself in the constitutional propensity, the indulged weakness, the right hand or right eye, that is too dear to be sacrificed, give glory to God by contrite acknowledgment; apply, afresh, to "the blood of sprinkling;" implore the Holy

Spirit's quickening energy; and, in the strength of the Lord, tear, from its lodgment in your bosom, the idol that has darkened your evidences of adoption, by intercepting between you and the tokens of your Heavenly Father's love. This method will not fail to put a cheerful song into your mouth; and when you have experienced what it is to walk all the day in the light of your Redeemer's countenance, you will be devoutly jealous of the least withdrawment of his smile, and watchful against every object that would divide your heart, and rob it of the undoubting assurance that you are the Lord's. Isaiah xliv. 5.

The scripture references adduced, p. 16, in support of the doctrine of assurance, are all taken from the Epistles of John. Many other citations might have been made, from various parts of the New Testament; and even the Old Testament contains numerous passages to the same effect. But the above selection has been made designedly, that those individuals who are guilty of fearfully abusing this doctrine, by misrepresentation, may be convinced that we flinch not from substantiating the dogma itself,

by the most unequivocal and pointed proofs that can possibly be produced;—proofs, too, which, while they sanction a consistent view of the doctrine, are quite opposed to the false and meretricious glare that has been thrown around it by the misjudging advocates of a blind, unquestioned, unevidenced assumption of a fact, which, from the very importance attaching to it, would need to be sifted, and ascertained by the most satisfactory process of investigation. There must be something wrong, when a man can express himself in language such as the following: "I never pray for pardon; for I know that I am pardoned:—I never pray that I may indeed be a child of God; for I have the witness of my adoption:—I never pray for salvation; for I know that I have eternal life." Now, admitting for a moment, that the individual so expressing himself is warranted in the conclusion at which he has arrived respecting his own state, does the highest measure of assurance justify our ceasing to pray for that, respecting which we are privileged to entertain a confidence so delightful? It is not surprising that unmeasured assurance should be cha-

raeterized by a strange degree of boldness and the neglect of appointed means; for its motto, unlike that of the Apostle Paul, is,—I have already attained and eount myself to have apprehended. But is this scriptural assuranee? David was a believer, and had a sense of the Divine forgiveness; for he could say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities;" yet he continued to plead, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity;" and, "Let me not be ashamed of my hope." The Prophet Daniel was a saint, so distinguished by the favour of the Most High, that the angel Gabriel was eommissioned to assure him, no less than three times, "Thou art greatly beloved;" and yet he prayed, "O Lord, forgive," and was filled with holy awe of the Majesty of that Being on whose reiterated assuranee of love he was reposing. And if we turn to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who surely knew, as elearly as any one, his own eleetion of God, shall we not find his assuranee tempered with modesty, and expressed with eaution? The effrontery that vaunts itself on this subjeet, as if there were an utter impos-

sibility of mistake, is condemned, and ought to be shamed into annihilation, by such sentiments as these, when it is considered whose they are: "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him;" "that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection;" "if that I may apprehend that, for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," "lest that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." It is needless to multiply quotations; these will suffice to show, that though Paul had a confidence towards God so free from dubiety, that, in reference to the prize, he could say, as one already in possession of it—"I so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air;" yet he did not hold, that the judgment of himself involved in that assurance was absolutely infallible; and therefore we find him beautifully illustrating in his own spirit, the precept which he thought it needful to enforce on others: "Be not high-minded, but fear."

Genuine christian assurance has none of the characteristics of presumption: it is a clear, calm, settled conviction, founded on evidence

that we do, indeed, believe the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. The evidence referred to does not consist in mere consciousness, but in a correspondence between the *seal* of adoption, and the *impression* which that seal makes upon the heart and life. Here we are prepared to encounter the scornful sneer of the enthusiast, who is ready to say: 'O, now you are going to put us on a long, and almost obsolete kind of ordeal for the ascertainment of our graces, that we may look at them as the *ground* of our hope and assurance.' To this we reply: "God forbid that we should glory," or have any other ground of hope and assurance, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Most cordially do we sympathize with those, who, from a principle of holy jealousy, fear to mix up with the claims arising out of the pure mercy of God in the gift of the Saviour, any personal requisite, or fancied fitness, on the part of the sinner: but the evidences of which we speak are not pre-requisites, neither are they requisites, in any shape or kind, with respect to the matter of justification before God. They are fruits of faith, by which the existence of

that elemental principle in the soul is manifested, and by which we are to judge ourselves, in order that we may not be condemned. 1 Cor. xi. 31. The *simplicity* of faith is evinced by a reliance solely on the testimony of Jehovah: the *sincerity* of faith is proved by another kind of demonstration; namely, its influences and effects. That the first converts to Christianity enjoyed, and were warranted to enjoy, in the first instance, a full assurance of their covenant-relation to God, is no argument against the necessity of investigating the quality and operations of our professed belief in the Gospel. If *we* exercise the like simple and sincere faith, we shall realize, in proportion to the strength of our confidence, the same accompanying enjoyment: but, though those primitive Christians questioned not, with unbelieving disquietude, their acceptance "in the Beloved," yet, who is prepared to affirm, that a godly fear of being self-deceived did not prompt them to consider what manner of persons they ought to be "in all holy conversation and godliness," and, by means of evidence, to arrive at the happy conclusion, that their profession was

not a vain postulatum, but the result of a principle that would give them "boldness in the day of judgment." But this is not a mere matter of hypothesis: they were frequently exhorted to that effect: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves," &c.; and we do not find that they ever set any speculations of their own in array against apostolic injunctions, as if they imagined that such injunctions either derogated from the freeness of Divine grace, or in the slightest degree infringed upon that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Let it be further noticed, that these believers gave the most convincing evidences of their faith, and that, as soon as they believed; for some "sold their possessions, and laid the money at the Apostles' feet;" and others "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," knowing "in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance;" so that it could be truly said to them, as Paul expressed himself in writing to the brethren at Colosse, "The Gospel bringeth forth fruit in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of

God in truth." Surely, then, we have, in them, no precedent for a faith of assurance without corresponding effects to prove its genuineness.

The man of spurious pretensions to religion hates to have his views, motives, dispositions, and conduct tried by a standard that would prove him utterly wanting in intrinsic holiness; and if his inward reluctance to judge according to evidence be hid under the cloak of zeal for the uncorrupted, unclogged faith of the Gospel, he the more easily imposes on himself. But the true disciple of the cross, who takes the Holy Scriptures as he finds them, unshackled by system, and unperverted by sophistry, soon perceives that there is a danger, or, to say the least, a possibility of whispering to himself, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And in his anxiety to avoid a false estimate, where all is at stake, he not only looks within, to ascertain whether his heart be right with God, but invites, by supplication, the unerring scrutiny of Omniscience: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any

wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The important interrogation, "Am I his, or am I not?" does not necessarily disturb the settled persuasion of the mind. It is a question which tends to confirm, rather than shake our confidence, if that confidence be such as will bear examination. In order, however, to solve the inquiry, we must have the testimony of two witnesses to our sonship; our own spirit, and the Spirit of God: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." By our own spirit, we are obviously to understand the mind, as conscious of its own state. This is what the Apostle John calls "our heart:" "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 20, 21. It is also called conscience, as taking cognizance of the lawfulness, or unlawfulness of our actions: "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one

another," Rom. ii. 15; 1 Cor. ii. 11.—There is, then, such a thing as a consciousness that we do believe, John ix. 38; that we do love, John xxi. 17; that we do obey, 1 Thess. ii. 10; and this consciousness is, to a certain extent, though not alone, an evidence of our faith. Those who are fond of insisting on such consciousness, as the apostolic criterion of judgment, and consequently as in itself decisive, and who quote, in support of their opinion, the verses we have already cited from the Epistles of John, seem strangely to overlook the connexion of those passages with the significant dissyllables "hereby," and "because;" words which really seem to have been inserted by the inspired Apostle, for the express purpose of erecting a barrier against licentiousness in creed as well as in practice, Thus we read: 1 John ii. 3. "*Hereby* we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." iii. 14. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because* we love the brethren." iii. 24. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him: and *hereby* we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath

given us." It were easy to multiply similar instances, in which the writers of the New Testament argue from mental conseiousness, to some substantial evidence of its validity; but we stop here, because the last proof brings us at once to the consideration of the other, and mueh greater witness of our adoption, namely, the Spirit of God: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father."

There can be no doubt that the Spirit of God has immediate aeeess to the soul; and that the impression which He there produces is the originating cause of spiritual life, or regeneration. The operations of the same almighty Agent are no less necessary to maintain, than, in the first instance, to produee, this principle of vitality; hence the Holy Spirit is represented as our Sanetifier, 2 Thess. ii. 13 and 1 Pet. i. 2. And, as an essential means to our sanetifieation, He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to the mind, John xvi. 15; at the same time applying them to the understanding with a convincing power

and energy, and, to the affections with a ravishing sweetness, that make the recipient of His gracious communications at once holy and happy, in such measure as consists with the present state of imperfection, and with the kind and degree of discipline which the complete renewal of his character may yet require.

The manner of the Divine Spirit's operation on our spirits is not, as some have supposed, by an inward voice, or by the sudden and vivid suggestion of something, either past, present, or to come, that is not found written in the revealed record. It is true that this Heavenly Monitor suggests to our remembrance portions of sacred writ, or truths in accordance with its dictates; and these are often brought to our minds at seasons when we most need their recurrence: added to which, his enlightening and quickening influences so clear away the film from our spiritual vision, and remove the callousness of our hearts, that we are enabled to discern the beauty, and feel the force of those things, which relate to the person, offices, doctrines, and finished work of our Divine

Immanuel. But then these suggestions and influences are no new revelations: they only bring to our perception, with new power and efficiency, "the truth as it is in Jesus." There are three modes in which the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God: *First*, by the light which he sheds on the great facts of the gospel, whereby we apprehend them with greater perspicuity. *Secondly*, by the intensive character which he imparts to the work of grace within us, whereby the consciousness of our own faith becomes more sensible. And *Thirdly*, by the seal of moral likeness which he affixes to our character, whereby we ascertain that we are Christ's, Rom. viii. 9. Accordingly, the witness of the Spirit is always borne to the truth, and the truth alone; never to any dreams, fancies, or imaginations of our own. In fact, it is to His own work that He testifies, either as it is revealed in the Bible, experienced in the soul, or embodied in the life; and such is the pervading harmony and oneness in these several parts of His work, that there can be no col-

lision or contrariety between them. Hence, whatever we are made to know, or feel, or do, by His influence on our spirits, must have its counterpart in the inspired word, otherwise we may rest assured, that the communication, or excitement, does not proceed from the Spirit of Truth, neither is according to "the mind of the Spirit."

In conclusion, it is very delightful, and highly honourable to religion, when its professors are "led by the Spirit," and "walk after the Spirit," and enjoy "the witness of the Spirit," and bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit." Ye holy and consistent followers of your Lord—ye students of His bright and lovely example, whose daily aim it is to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things," cherish the promises of your Heavenly Father's love, and your Redeemer's grace, and the witness of your Divine Comforter. Assurance of these will gild your daily path in life, animate your spirit in every conflict, and smooth your pillow in a dying hour! To you, (for "we have confidence in the Lord touching

you,") and to as many as are indeed "called, and chosen, and faithful," we would say, in the language of mingled congratulation and encouragement, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Chap. II.

ON MIRACLES.

—— ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶ τέλειοι γίνεσθε.

What are miracles? What authentic records do we possess of genuine miracles? For what ends has miraculous power been exerted? What evidence have we that miracles have ceased, agreeably to the Divine purpose, and not in consequence of any fault on the part of the church of God? And, lastly, What are those marks of spuriousness that characterize modern miracles, and render them unworthy of our credence? These are the points to be briefly noticed in the present chapter.

As our pages are not addressed to Deists, the fact of the credibility of miracles is assumed without any further argument than may necessarily be involved in the consideration of the above-mentioned particulars. The reader, who

may be desirous of studying that subject, will find it ably treated in Campbell's "Dissertation in answer to Hume," and Douglas's "Criterion."

What are miracles? Miracles have been variously, and, sometimes, incautiously defined. We should say that they are divine and supernatural operations: divine, because attributable to nothing short of Almighty agency; and, supernatural, because above the reach of any regular causes, or combination of such causes, to effect. They are the result of the introduction of some new efficiency, not contrary to nature, as some have imagined, but superinduced upon the known and ordinary principles of the Divine administration. They are demonstrations of that illimitable power of the Godhead, by which the boundary that confines our apprehension to the existence of certain causes with their established dependencies, beyond which we cannot reason, is overstepped, for some great purpose or purposes, connected with the glory of Jehovah. They are signal manifestations of the finger of God, and may not improperly be represented as extraordinary

"forthcomings" of God. But if such be the fact, let us beware that we mistake not the "forthcomings" of "deceivableness" for the footsteps of the Great Supreme.

What authentic records do we possess of genuine miracles? These are to be found in the Holy Scriptures, to which, as the only indisputable source of information on the subject, we confine our attention. These records contain a complete history of the church of God, from its infancy in the patriarchal age, to the period when the scheme of redemption was fully revealed by Christ and his Apostles, and that body of documentary testimony completed, which was to constitute, in itself, such a perfect system of doctrinal and practical direction, for every successive generation, as should supersede the necessity of any additional matter of revelation, until "the Lord," himself, "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," &c. Rev. xxii. 18. We find the whole of this interesting series of the Church's history, studded, as it were, with miracles, more or less thickly set, at different intervals. Those of Moses appear in the fore-

ground, prominent both in number and importanee; after which, if we glance at the miraeles mentioned in Judges, Chronieles, and the Prophetieal books, they will be found to form a pretty regular chain, extending to the time when the eanon of the Jewish Seriptures was brought to a close, i. e., on the return of the Jews from the Babylonish eaptivity. The chain is then broken, by an intermission of more than four eenturies, the end of which brings us to the miracles of the New Testament. These eommeneed with the incarnation and ministry of our Divine Redeemer, continued through the apostolic age, and were still wrought by those on whom the power had been conferred, by the laying on of the Apostles' hands,* until the canon of the New Testament, being written and eollected, went forth into the world, as "the sword of the Spirit," to achieve, unaided by further demonstration to the senses, its own glorious and consummate vietories. This point is the extreme verge of inspired authority on the subjeet; and unless it ean be proved from Holy Seripture, that miraeles were

* Acts viii. 17, 18.

to be perpetuated to the end of time, the belief of their prolonged duration is nothing better than an approximation towards Romish credulity, and boundless superstition. We may be told that the Word, which authorized the primitive disciples to exercise the faith of miracles, is still in force, and as much addressed to us, as it was to them: but as this notion is founded, in a great measure, on false ideas respecting the design of miracles, we defer entering on that branch of the argument, till we have resolved the previous question—viz.:

For what ends has miraculous power been exerted? The dispensations of Jehovah to his church have ever been analogous to the conduct of a wise and tender father towards a son, whom it is his aim to rear with gentleness, to educate with care, and at last to endow with ample possessions, and abundant wealth. In the early state of the Jewish Theocracy, the infant charge of Divine providence and grace was nourished with manna from heaven, resembling the dew, or hoar frost of the morning:—to slake his thirst, water was fetched from the rock, by the smiting of a

rod:—the sun was made to stand still, and the moon to stay her waning:—iron was caused to swim:—and the Prophet's mantle, waving over the stream, parted the waters of Jordan in the midst. In all this, there was nothing trivial: it was fraught with meaning, and replete with instruction. The child, scarcely advanced enough to read in *written* characters, his father's love, could plainly discern it in these broad clear signs, which came home with vividness to his heart, and forbade him to distrust the truth of those promises of *better things to come*, which would have been very little heeded, at that early age, if they had been conveyed in the form of a bare abstract declaration. At length the little one advances to a period bordering on maturity; and a much larger portion of his father's goods are intrusted to his hands. These are made over to him, duly *sealed* and attested; and the same end which was answered, in his infancy, by the sign, or picture, is produced in after years, by that legal evidence which proves the validity of the document wherein the bounty of his parent is certified to him. This simple

illustration is intended to show, that the ends designed by the Almighty in the exercise of miraculous power, have been the instruction of his children, and the confirmation of his word. The miracles of Moses were so many lessons in the Infant School of Christ, and the miracles of Jesus are so many signatures of his hand to the richer grace conferred on us in the Gospel. Thus, the burning bush in the sight of Moses, was a significant token that the Lord would be with him in the execution of his high and arduous commission, Exod. iii. 16:—the rod of signs in his hand was to convince the Hebrew nation that Jehovah had indeed looked upon their affliction, and heard their cry, and that the announcement of deliverance which he published among them was truly an authoritative message from the God of their fathers, and not the arrogant device of an impostor, Exod. iv. 17, & 30, 31:—the miracles of our Lord were attestations of his character and claims as that Messiah of whom it had been predicated, "Your God will come and save you: then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the

lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing," Isa. xxxv. 4—6; and Matt. xi. 3—6:—and the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred on the Apostles and primitive disciples, were to afford demonstrative proofs of the authority delegated to them, not only for the propagation of the truth, but, more especially, for the completion of that system of doctrine and discipline, which was not fully developed during our Lord's personal ministry, but was left by him, to be embodied in the writings of his chosen Evangelists. Hence Paul speaks of his own part in this commission "to *fulfil* the word of God," Col. i. 25, in the original πληρῶσαι, a word of larger import than διδάσκειν, to teach, and which signifies to teach *fully*, *completely*, so as to leave out nothing essential to the guidance of the Church in faith and practice.

It will, doubtless, be tauntingly asked, by the advocates of modern miracles, Is then the Church so perfect in knowledge, as to need no more instruction? so strong in faith, as to require no further confirmation? As to the former question, let the Spirit of Truth, by

whom the word was dictated, reply: "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," Heb. i. 1, 2; "God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect," Heb. xi. 40: both of which passages show plainly, that though the Jewish dispensation was neither "faultless," (Heb. viii. 7,) nor "final" (Heb. x. 9,) yet the Christian economy is essentially *complete.* Accordingly, to those who are looking for Divine manifestation in the way of a new revelation, it may, with propriety, be said: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" "This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." That the Church, taken as a whole, most wofully needs instruction, cannot be denied; but lessons of wisdom must be learned at the feet of Jesus, and not in "the jargon-teaching schools" of modern enthusiasm. And, as to the second question, the necessity of renewed miracles for the confirmation of our faith, we fearlessly maintain, that the truth of the inspired Volume is established by abundant

evidence, so that the conclusion is applicable to those who credit not the miracles of Christ and his Apostles, "neither would they believe, though one rose from the dead." We need no other confirmation of our faith than those authentic miracles which originally attested, and placed beyond all doubt, the fact of the resurrection of our Redeemer from the dead—itself a miraculous fact, on which the whole fabric of New Testament truth rests, as upon a foundation firmer than the adamantine rock. If, indeed, a new revelation were proposed to our belief, that certainly would require fresh miracles to prove its authenticity: but the Apostle Paul has taught us how to deal with those who preach "another gospel," or another revelation "than that we have received." Gal. i. 7—9.

What evidence have we that miracles have ceased according to the Divine purpose, and not in consequence of any fault on the part of the Church of God? The above query assumes, as an undisputed fact, that miracles have ceased; and indeed it would never have occurred to us to justify the assumption, any

more than to adduce arguments in proof that the Apostles died long ago, or that the church at Roseneath is not the identical one to which Paul addressed these words,—"There must be also heresies among you," &c.: but we have been not a little surprised to read, in a recent pamphlet, of "the re-appearance, or rather, *the continuance* of miraculous gifts in the church." Their "re appearance" is a word, which we know how to construe, as having reference to the west country miracles of Caledonia; but the term "continuance" is not so easily deciphered. In vain do we search the pages of history, whether sacred or profane, for any thing like a pure succession of the kind. If, however, it be designed to include the dove that flew out of the body of St. Polycarp; the exit and return of devils at the command of St. Gregory; the silencing of Apollo by the bones of St. Babylus; the picture changed into a bloody spear; the roasted fowl turned into stone; the bleeding wafers; the wonderful migrations of the Virgin's house; and a thousand times ten thousand instances of similar repute, it would certainly not be so

difficult to trace a line through the dark ages, down to the last century, when "the blessed Deacon" (Abbé Paris) flourished, and afterwards gained no small degree of celebrity, by the supernatural cures effected through his posthumous intercessions. These miracles, with a few intermediate links that might be mentioned, concatenate extremely well with the wonders of our own times; and thus the whole series forms a sort of "continuance," such as it is. But though this explanation does not appear to cast any unmerited imputation on modern miracles, the connexion in which it places those of our Divine Master and his really gifted followers, reflects upon *them* such palpable dishonour, that we would gladly find any other mode of interpreting an expression, which, if it have any meaning at all, most certainly impugns the belief of the cessation of miraculous powers. It behoves us, therefore, to set the matter in its true light, not simply by stating it as the general conviction of the Protestant Church, that miracles ceased nearly seventeen hundred years ago, but by exhibiting the grounds on which that conviction rests.

The main difficulty in this argument arises from the impracticability of fixing the precise point of time when it may be affirmed that miracles absolutely ceased; but this difficulty is owing to causes, so natural in themselves, and so easy of solution, that it does not, in the least degree, affect the conclusion, though it lays the subject more open to the superficial cavils of the sceptic, and to the adhesion of those fungous excrescences of opinion, which are now found to luxuriate even in the dry, cold, and healthy regions of the North.

The difference between day and night is too obvious to be disputed; and we need not appeal to science for a proof, that the glorious orb of day sheds not its cheering light upon the midnight hour: but if the profoundest astronomer be required to ascertain the precise moment when the line may be drawn between the last beam of twilight, and the inchoation of night by the withdrawment of the solar ray from the first darkening atom, even the sublime genius of a Newton, and the nicely-calculating powers of a Herschel, would be arrested by a difficulty precisely similar in its character to

that which meets the Christian logician in his investigation of the point in hand.* Indeed the analogy is very striking: for, have we not, first, the mid-day splendour of apostolic gifts; then the remaining light of genuine miracles, blended with the advancing shades of imposition, forming a sort of twilight in the first century; and, finally, the gradual merging of that twilight into the total absence of miraculous communications? Not that the church was then left in darkness: no—its true, spiritual, and permanent light—the Sun of Righteousness, shining in the Inspired Volume, remains, and shall remain, through every age the same, resplendent and alone;—needing not the concurrent lustre of the stars, whose lesser lights emanate from its own central fire—far less, the glare of those torches which are kindled by the breath of vain, presumptuous mortals.

The Apostles, doubtless, possessed the gifts of tongues and miracles in an extraordinary degree; and also the power of conferring those gifts upon others. This power, however, was

* Job xxxviii. 19, 20.

not exercised in every instance of the laying on of their hands, but only in special cases, when the act was performed with an express design to impart miraculous gifts, as may be seen by a careful perusal of the Acts of the Apostles, from which narrative it appears, that the imposition of hands was a form used in designating persons (sometimes individuals already gifted, Acts xiii. 2, 3) to some particular work; also, in the healing of the sick, Acts viii. 8, &c. &c. That these supernatural communications should be extended beyond the persons and lives of the Apostles, was necessary for the accomplishment of the very design for which they were originally given; for the great principles of the Christian faith had much to contend with at the period of their early promulgation. Besides, they were to be diffused abroad, in countries remote from the scene of those transactions to which the first miracles bore witness; and, therefore, until the New Testament Scriptures were *entire*, and brought into such a form as to furnish a universal and unerring standard of judgment and appeal, sustained by its own cumulative and *complete* evidence, it was wisely

and graciously appointed that miracles should still be wrought, whenever the exigency of the case required it, either for the substantiating of apostolic doctrine, or the silencing of infidel objections. The books of the New Testament, *as a complete Canon*, were known to Origen, who flourished about one hundred years after the death of the Apostle John; and it is a very remarkable circumstance, that, though most of the original writings of this great and learned man have perished, his catalogue of these books has been preserved by Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History.* This fact is important, as it exhibits the coincidence, in point of time,

* "In this catalogue he mentions the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, fourteen Epistles of Paul, two of Peter, three of John, and the book of Revelation. This enumeration includes all the present Canon, except the Epistles of James and Jude, but these were omitted by accident, not design; for, in other parts of his writings, he acknowledges these Epistles as a part of the Canon. And while Origen furnishes us with so full a catalogue of the books now in the Canon, he inserts no others; which proves, that in his time, the Canon was well settled among the learned; and that the distinction between inspired writings and human compositions, was as clearly marked as at any subsequent period."—*Alexander, on the Canon of Scripture*, pp. 146, 147.

between the collection of the books of the New Testament into a whole, and the cessation of all miracles of an unquestionable character.

It is worth while to pause here, in order to notice the beautiful harmony of the Divine procedure towards the church, on different occasions. The Mosaic dispensation was to be superseded by a brighter and better system; but its institutions were not abruptly set aside, without any tender regard to the long-cherished prepossessions of a people, who were, in some sense, commendably jealous of any disparagement of their rudimental services: on the contrary, their ancient ritual was gradually thrown into the shade, by the introduction of "the heavenly things themselves," of which that ritual afforded only "the patterns," until, by an almost imperceptible decay, the first covenant "waxed old, and vanished away." Heb. viii. 13; ix. 23. In like manner, those "signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," which had been equally appointed of God, "according to his own will," for a specific purpose, were to be discontinued when that purpose was effected,

namely, the confirmation of the Gospel, Heb. ii. 3, 4 ; but they were not suddenly withdrawn, leaving the church to mourn an unsupplied deficiency, an uncompensated bereavement.— No; they ceased gradually, as the gifted saints passed, one after another, into the world of spirits; and, when they wholly disappeared, the church was in possession of that written treasure, *the Bible*, which, by its continuance unimpaired and uncorrupted, during so many centuries, amidst the fire of persecution, the malice of infidelity, and the rage of hell, presents to the world *a standing miracle* of daily obviousness, in comparison of which the thaumaturgical pretensions of Rome and Russia, France and Britain, appear like the puny efforts of the magicians, in the presence of the divinely constituted legislator of the Jews.

That miracles should cease when their end had been attained, is, to say the least, a very rational surmise, and one, which observation, aided by credible testimony of the past, is every way calculated to confirm. It is much to be regretted, that deceivers, whose aim it was to

make a gain of godliness, should have exercised their "cunning craftiness" at so early a period of the Christian economy, as to occasion their fraudulent attempts to be presented on the pages of ecclesiastical history, dovetailed, as it were, with the sacred and genuine operations of Almighty agency. It is no libel to affirm that such was the case: the fact is too apparent from the writings of the early Fathers; and if, at first view, it be thought improbable that men of undoubted learning and piety should be imposed on by "lying wonders," let it be considered, how naturally, in an age of abounding superstition, their minds were led on from the belief of true miracles, upon irrefragable evidence, to the indiscriminate and too credulous admission of reports, which had no better foundation than the gross frauds so frequently and successfully practised under the mask of divinely delegated power. We speak not of the monstrous legends of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, when monkery was accounted "a way of life worthy of heaven," for it is inconceivable that even a single Protestant should be found giving credence to such a heap of self-

refuting absurdities: but the writings to which reference is here made, are those of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, &c. &c., on whose authority it is stated, that "it was impossible to reckon up all the mighty works which the church performed, every day, to the benefit of nations." Now, this assertion, from the very nature of it, must have been, for the most part, grounded on *hearsay;* and when, in addition to the vagueness of such representations, we take into the account the number of wild and enthusiastic notions entertained by the primitive Fathers, it is not possible to avoid the conclusion, that there was occasionally a defect of judgment in those eminent men, which, combining with the arts of imposture practised by the designing, has proved, and still proves, prejudicial to the interests of truth, by rendering it no easy task to distinguish facts which might be received on the faith of their veracity, as eye-witnesses, from the multitudinous falsehoods to which, for want of due caution, they have unconsciously lent the sanction of their names.

We have, thus far, endeavoured to establish our hypothesis of the cessation of miracles,

according to the Divine purpose, by the argument that *their design was fully and finally accomplished* about the middle of the second century; which era, as we have shown, coincides with that mixed state of truth and error arising from the advantage taken by "seducing spirits," to substitute pretended miracles in the place of those which were gradually ceasing, in consequence of the non-communication of spiritual gifts. There is, however, another ground on which the same position is tenable; that is, the *silence of the New Testament* in reference to the permanent duration of miraculous powers, and the duty of the church to perpetuate their exercise. This branch of the subject merits particular examination.

When our Lord commissioned his twelve Apostles to go and preach the Gospel, he furnished them with power to do many wonderful works, and invested them with such a degree of authority, that their persons and message were to be regarded with the same deference as would be due to himself. Matt. x. 40. From the enumeration of the miracles they were to perform, (ver. 8.) it is evident that they were

almost all like his own works of mercy, which, while confirmatory of the truths they published, furnished them, at the same time, with means of remunerating the hospitality and kindness they might experience, in a way of surpassing bounty worthy of the King of Zion, in whose service they went forth. The seventy Evangelists were subsequently sent out with a similar commission, and with equal endowments; and so enthusiastically did they prize the powers conferred on them, that they boasted, "even the demons are subject unto us;" in reply to which, our Lord intimated the inferiority of mere miraculous gifts to the portion of the meanest child of God, though destitute of such extraordinary powers. Luke x. 19, 20. The whole of the narrative justifies the conclusion that these were, in both instances, *special communications* to *certain individuals* for a *definite purpose*: and perhaps this statement may be allowed, to its very limited extent, to remain undisputed. The words of our Lord, on a later occasion, however, have a more extensive application. Mark xvi. 17, 18. "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my

name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." These words form part of the more enlarged commission of our Lord to his eleven Apostles, (ver. 14, 15,) previous to his being taken up from them into heaven; and, to their almost fainting spirits, burdened with the thought of their Divine Master's personal withdrawment, and the arduous work which he was leaving them to accomplish by his promised aid, must have afforded a most cheering development of the additional instruments and means that were about to be put into operation for the further propagation of the Gospel, and the establishment of his kingdom in the world. If we would rightly understand the mind of the Spirit in this or any other passage of Holy Writ, we must not consider it as a detached, isolated fragment, but view it in its relations and consequent bearings on the subject of which it treats. Let us, then, proceed by a just rule of judgment, and not by the criterion of vague, popu-

lar notions, that may be afloat respecting it, to consider what was our Lord's meaning when he uttered this interesting declaration. The question, my dear reader, is not what you think about it, nor what opinion respecting it the writer of these pages may entertain. Let us, therefore, enter on the subject in the spirit of that wisdom which is "without partiality."

"*These signs shall follow them that believe.*" The turning point in this investigation is, does this expression include every one that believeth, simply considered; or, every one that believeth, considered in reference to those of whom our Saviour was speaking, viz.: the heralds whom he would appoint to the work of the ministry, through the preaching of the Apostles, and who were to be qualified for taking part in their labours, by the endowment of gifts that would enable them to work the signs following? Either it must mean every believer *indiscriminately*, and *without exception;* or every chosen herald of the apostolic age. The verse immediately preceding, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned," is, without doubt,

susceptible of *universal* application, because, in these words, our Lord is declaring the effects that would result "to every creature" from the reception or rejection of promulged mercy. If any one maintain that it is unjust and capricious to give to the verse under consideration a more restricted interpretation, and that it is equally capable of application to believers in all ages of the church, we are prepared to show that the distinction is founded neither in caprice nor partiality, and for this reason: all human beings, considered merely as objects of Divine mercy, are alike; but all believers, as members of the church of Christ, are not alike. For, "are all Apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are ALL *workers of miracles?* have ALL *the gifts of healing?* do ALL *speak with tongues?* do all interpret?" Hence the distinction between the universal application of the gospel message in one verse, and the restricted application of gifts in the next, so far from being made to serve a point, is founded in truth, necessity, and the very nature of things. Not that we have the slightest prejudice against the most unlimited extension of these words, if

it could be made to harmonize with fact; but is it not in that case absolutely essential to the verification of the words, that every individual believer, in every age and nation, should work the signs referred to? But can it be affirmed that such ever has been, or is now the case? Rather, must we not be driven, by such an interpretation, to the inevitable conclusion, that not so much as a single believer has existed, since the middle of the second century, if we except the workers of miracles in the dark ages, with the modern Prince Hohenloe, and his contemporary pretenders in their train, unworthy though they are to bear away the palm of such an honourable appellation. But an absurdity so great, as that every individual believer is, or ought to be, capable of exercising miraculous powers, never has, we believe, been maintained; and, therefore, consistency requires, that the literal, unrestricted sense of the passage should be given up with manly ingenuousness.

It is sometimes argued, indeed, (and very plausibly, because the position is partly true,) that the absence of grace and gifts does not necessarily imply a purpose of God that it should

be so, but is attributable to want of faith on the part of the church. The fact cannot be too much insisted on, that if supineness, indifference, and formality, abound in the church, the prevalent cause of these evils is to be found in the want, or weakness of faith; but as faith is the belief of a testimony, and cannot exist in the mind abstractedly, that is to say, without an object, it is manifestly wrong to cast censure on the church for not believing that which never was presented to it as matter of faith. Thus, when called upon to believe that many of the first converts to Christianity cast out demons; spake with tongues; survived the deadly draught administered by the hand of treachery and malice; we need not hesitate. There is well sustained testimony respecting these things, on which faith can rest with confidence. But, when we are told, that "if the period be not actually arrived, it is, at least, fast approaching, when it will be as necessary for the Holy Ghost to make himself manifest to God's children by visible signs, as it was in the first ages of Christianity;"* the mind refuses

* Morning Watch, No. vii. p. 621.

its assent to an assertion to which Divine authority gives no countenance In conclusion, if it cannot be proved from other parts of the New Testament, that the supernatural gifts here spoken of are promised to all believers, or to some believers in all ages; and if, moreover, there is no warrant for the exercise of faith, respecting any purpose of God to continue such gifts in his church, there remains no alternative, but either to affix to this verse the less extended sense, or to substitute for faith the delusions of unbridled fancy.

No little stress is laid upon the fact, that the New Testament contains so many directions about the manner of exercising spiritual gifts, and that the Apostle Paul has left an express exhortation to *desire* them (1 Cor. xiv. 1), together with some other advices of similar import. It cannot be matter of surprise, that, in an age when spiritual gifts were conferred, and when the ends they were to answer were so obviously important, there should be, in the writings of the Apostles, a few scattered notices and incitements, and even so much connected matter on the subject as forms, in our division

of the sacred books, two whole chapters of rules and observations. 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. These were designed to correct certain disorders which had crept into the church at Corinth, and to furnish laws in respect of gifts, for the government of that and other existing churches, amongst which the occasional interchange of apostolic epistles (as Col. iv. 16) extended the benefit and rendered it mutual. The incorporation of these laws into the Canon of Scripture, at the very crisis when human wisdom would infer that the cessation of miraculous endowments must render them inapplicatory and fruitless, affords a striking proof how much "the foolishness of God," as blind misjudging mortals may term it, "is wiser than men; and the weakness of God stronger than men." For it is worthy of remark, that a careful perusal and right understanding of one of the very sections of divine truth to which we have referred (1 Cor. xiv.), would at once stem the tide of some most egregious errors of the present day: and if applicable now, why not at other periods? Let us take, for example, verses 6—13, which are so faithfully and happily paraphrased by

Gilpin, in his Exposition of the New Testament, that we shall cite the passage, as the true sense of the original, in preference to giving it in our own words: "If I neither make the revelation, nor the doctrine intelligible, what end does my speaking answer? If the trumpet give no distinction of sound, how shall the soldier be directed? Just so, if your discourse is no address to the understanding, what is its effect? God hath given the blessing of languages to mankind *to communicate their sentiments: without this use, language is nothing.* Let me then repeat what I said, that as you are zealous of your spiritual gifts, I would have you make them answer the great purpose for which they were intended—the edification of the church. *Let none of you, therefore, speak in an unknown tongue, unless what he says is interpreted either by himself or others.*" It would require no apology if we were to give the whole of this chapter, from the pen of so able and judicious an expositor; but we must content ourselves with one other extract: verses 20—23. "Be not then carried away, like children, by novelties; but, like men, use your

understanding; and *consider the end for which the gift of tongues was imparted.* You remember the early prediction of this great gift, 'With other tongues and with other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet they will not hear.' To speak in an unknown tongue, therefore, you see, may be a miracle to convert unbelievers; but to those who believe, expounding is the proper application. *Unknown languages, used incautiously, will discredit religion instead of aiding it.* What, think you, would an unbeliever suppose, who should enter your assemblies, and find a person talking to the congregation *in a language which none of them understood?* It would make him suppose, that you were *rather mad than inspired.*"* If the

* The note, at the foot of the page, as given by Gilpin, is of such general and practical utility to preachers, that we insert it here.

"Though the gift of tongues hath ceased amongst us, this chapter is an admirable piece of instruction to the clergy of any country—especially to the young clergy, who are often not attentive enough to accommodate themselves to their hearers. What matters it, though they speak neither in Greek nor in Latin, if they treat subjects, or use words and phrases which the people do not understand? And if they do this to

words we have here quoted had just issued from the press, it would have been difficult to prove, that they were not devised and framed for the express purpose of putting to the blush such sentiments as those recently advanced. For instance: "What proof is there that these sounds, or tongues, are really *languages, spoken languages?* I have no proof, and I ask no proof." Again: "It does not appear from the history, whether the disciples themselves *knew what they were saying.*"* But enough of this; for, really, when a writer can adduce such a text as 1 Cor. xiv. 10, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and *none of them without signification*," to prove his opinion, that "many tongues were spoken which were *never interpreted*," while the speakers themselves, be it remembered, "*knew*

show their parts and learning, they fall *directly* into the fault which the Apostle here reproves—that of ostentatiously displaying their gifts. If they would wish to preach for the sake of edifying, they cannot possibly use words of too easy a signification; for they who have been most conversant with low people, know best the short extent of their ideas.—Vol. ii. p. 188.

* Gifts of the Spirit, p. 19.

not what they were saying"—his reasoning appears so utterly devoid of common sense, that no power of interpretation, upon lucid principles, can enable any one to fathom what he means. Alas! that Christianity should have an advocate such as this! The free-thinker cannot fail to laugh, while the enlightened believer mourns in secret over a mass of crudities and contradictions, that can deserve no better name than that of pious jugglery.

All the evidence that can be gathered from the partial references made in the New Testament to the exercise of spiritual gifts, must fall far short of disproving the silence of Scripture as to any purpose of God to continue those gifts, and the consequent duty of the church to pray for and expect them. We hope it has been further shown, that there was much divine wisdom in the perpetuating of instructions concerning them, even after the actual cessation of miracles, because those instructions are capable of practical and salutary influence by application to varied forms of error in all ages.

And are there, then, no intimations in the New Testament of miracles *to be expected?*

Yes; truly there are—and such as even now dawn upon our view, making every thoughtful mind inquire, with solemnity, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work;" and the ἐνέργεια πλάνης of "that wicked one" is on the increase. 2 Thess. ii. 7—12. Ignorance, like an unclean spirit first went forth, and brooded over centuries; then followed superstition: and now infidelity is bringing up the rear. "For they are the spirits of devils, *working miracles:* which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Rev. xvi. 13, 14. It is on this very serious ground that we deprecate so many minds being led away by imaginary miracles; for it is easy to foresee how surreptitiously the spirit of infidelity, combined with human science, and an acute perception of the springs of human action, may, ere long, avail itself of popular religious notions respecting gifts and miracles, to bring about that awful apostacy, which, notwithstanding all its evils, we have the consolation of know-

ing shall be subordinated to the Divine purposes, and issue in the final triumph of the church.

We come now to take up the last topic of inquiry proposed at the opening of this chapter, viz.:

What are those marks of spuriousness that characterise modern miracles, and render them unworthy of our credence? When the Apostle Paul was about to classify the different kinds of supernatural gifts conferred on the primitive church (1 Cor. xii.), he prefaced the enumeration by a distinct reference to the operations of the Triune-Jehovah, as follows: "Now there are diversities of gifts; but the same *Spirit*. And there are differences of administration; but the same *Lord*. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same *God* who worketh all in all." Verses 4, 5, 6. These words convey, in a concise form, an acknowledgment of the Divine and Omnipotent agency of the *Three* persons in the Godhead uniting, as essentially *One*, in the great object of setting a seal to the work of redemption, by

the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the shedding forth of miraculous gifts upon the New Testament church. The passage contains, at the same time, an implied recognition that the gifts in question were such as it was worthy of the Divine Being to bestow. There is a significancy in the mode of expression, which seems to say, "Look at these gifts:—compare them:—there are differences; but every kind is necessary, useful, beneficial, and illustrative of the wisdom, power, goodness, and grace of Him 'who worketh all in all'." And it is abundantly obvious, from a consideration of Bible miracles, that, both in their nature and effects, they reflect glory on the name of the Most High, and are calculated to carry, to every enlightened mind, a conviction of their intrinsic excellence. This consistency with the Divine attributes and designs, is, in our apprehension, the grand characteristic feature of *true* miracles; and it is our present purpose to show, in a few leading particulars, that such criteria are totally wanting in the miraculous pretensions of the year 1830.

Before entering upon this subject, it may be proper to state, that the phrase *working of miracles*, and the simple word *miracles*, are here frequently employed in a general and comprehensive sense, including the exercise of all, or any kind of supernatural gifts; hence, if any should object, that tongues are not miracles, and that miracles are not tongues, we admit a distinction which is sustained equally by Scripture and reason; but as the gift of tongues was as much a miraculous communication as the power of raising the dead, it ought not to be deemed an argument *sine discrimine*, if we sometimes adopt the phrase in its popular, though less definite acceptation.

In the first place, then, miracles are extremely suspicious *when the individual pretending to them, and the subject on whom the work is wrought, are persons of ardent imagination and extravagant fancy.* There was, doubtless, among the disciples on whom the gifts of the Holy Ghost were originally conferred, a vast variety of natural temperament; for, even in the little circle of our Lord's first chosen followers, there was a James — all

fervour :* a John—all love : † and a Peter—all impetuosity. ‡ Supposing indeed that these three, connected as they were by kindred, calling, and a thousand sympathies, had been the only champions of the cross endowed with extraordinary powers, that circumstance could not have invalidated their testimony, nor invested it with a spurious aspect, because the signs and wonders which they wrought were accompanied with evidence too decisive to be controverted. At the same time, it must be admitted, that their pretensions alone, and without proof, would have been the more readily and justly discredited, on account of that known ardour, and ofttimes misjudging zeal, by which they were so peculiarly characterized. But, in the case of these Apostles, there was no possibility of deception arising from constitutional sensitiveness, any more than from fraudulent collusion : for there were found among the number of the twelve, a calm,

* Luke ix. 54.

† The term *love* occurs above a hundred times in his writings.

‡ John xviii. 10.

cool, discerning, practical James :*—a cautious, penetrative, discriminating Jude : † — and an incredulous Thomas, who required ocular demonstration before he would believe the united testimony of his brethren. ‡ Here, then, were counter qualities to prevent the overweening influence of the other more imaginative spirits. But how does the matter stand with reference to modern miracles? Who are the workers of them? and who their avowed advocates and supporters?—Persons, all of them, more or less, of a wild, erratic turn of mind. Witness the high state of excitement—the ecstacy—the swoon—the rolling eye—the clasped hands—the agitated frame—the noisy convocation—the mystic utterance! Where is it possible to find an exhibition of fanatical extravaganeies, if the recent scenes at Gareloch and elsewhere do not present some of its rankest specimens? Let us look a little more narrowly at these mushroom devotees. Shall we find the aged,

* James (the less) i. 5. 17. 27 ; ii. 14 ; iii. 13 ; iv. 17 ; v. 7.

† John xiv. 22. Jude 22, 23.

‡ John xx. 24, 25.

experienced Christian among the infatuated tribe? Does the close, textual, enlightened and judicious student of the Sacred Volume take his station at the feet of the maid of Fernicarry? Do we find a Wardlaw there? a Brown? a Belfrage? a Ewing? a Gordon? a Russel? or any other divine profoundly acquainted with "the truth as it is in Jesus?"—No!—with the exception of two or three good men, concerning whom we did hope and expect better things, the followers of our fair visionary consist of young ladies full of ardour, and fond of novelty, or individuals whose minds, inexperienced and unpoised, are like the gallant merchantman that has just left port with, it may be, some precious freight on board, but with too little ballast to give it the proper and necessary ponderance. Let it not be said that we are re-echoing the cry, "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" for, in matters of faith, we are among the last to call any man master upon earth. It is not because these men "sit in Moses' seat," that we appeal to their views and conduct in reference to modern miracles—but because of the eminent and

deserved estimation which they have acquired among the brethren in Christ, by their solid learning, sanctified talents, and consistent piety. It is not presumed that this reasoning can, in itself, prove conclusive; but as an auxiliary argument it is deserving of consideration, and ought to have its due weight. A deduction fairly drawn from indisputable premises speaks loudly as to the merits of the question; but we need not rest them here, for there is much stronger data by which a definitive judgment may be formed.

There is, however, very little hope that any thing can be said with advantage to those who have already succeeded in palming upon their own minds the persuasion that modern miracles are a work of God, and that they themselves, or others, are moved by the Holy Ghost to perform them; and who scruple not to put down sound reason and scriptural argument with, "*that's from the devil!*"—a sort of oracular decision from which there can be no appeal, without incurring the guilt of blasphemy; but happy shall we be, if our endeavours avail but to fence the ground with

cautions and statements of the truth, that may be the means of keeping one youthful mind from venturing within the range of a falsely fascinating influence. And with this view, it is of importance to point out how naturally those surprising circumstances, now ascribed to miraculous agency, and which, in a few solitary instances, are not, certainly, to be regarded as absolute fabrications, may be accounted for upon natural principles. There are some supposable cases in which it would be impossible, without a dereliction of common sense, to explain the occurrence upon any such principles: thus, for example, if Miss Mary Campbell* would once favour us by *walking on the sea, raising the dead*, or, *drying up the waters of the Gareloch* by her word—a single act of the kind, well authenticated, must put the stamp of credibility on her supernatural pretensions, because nothing within the limits of known natural causation could enable mankind to put any other construction upon it. But what is the utmost stretch of ability, of which this mighty pretender and her compeers

* Now Mrs. Cairne.

have given proof? Why the whole amount of their executive commission seems to be, the partial healing of two or three invalids; the utterance of unintelligible sounds; and a few instances of interpretation, which, it might be presumed from their rareness, convey some message gravely essential to the interests of the church; though, alas for us! we have not been able to discover in them any thing, certain well-known passages of Scripture excepted, but what is calculated to make a large demand on that kind of sufferance of which the Apostle Paul speaks, when he is showing how men ordinarily used to bear with fools. 2 Cor. xi. 19, 20. It is true, we are not without intimations that "greater things than these" are hatching. In the mean time, let us analyse what we have in hand, by tracing the effects actually produced to their very simple causes, without going beyond the revealed arcana of nature for their solution. This, however, we cannot attempt, without danger of dispelling some of that spirit of wonderment which shrouds from the view of many, especially of the young, the true native character of these

apparently mystic events. Much of the astonishment excited by hearing of sudden and miraculous cures, "done in a corner," arises from not duly considering the intimate connexion and reciprocal actings of mind and matter in the constitution of human nature. The powerful operations of thoughts, feelings, wishes, purposes, and resolves, in rousing, stimulating, and strengthening the frame, are lost sight of. Is it not a fact, however, that a man, under suitable and sufficient excitement, can overcome difficulties, which, in the absence of such excitement, he would deem insurmountable? And does not the energy elicited by peculiar circumstances, and forcible motives, enable persons very far to outstrip their ordinary powers of action? Observation alone is sufficient to confirm this general proposition, which might easily be carried into detail, and exhibited in its more transcendental modes and influences. The subject of the cure is, not a cold, calculating genius, with a frame naturally athletic, though, it may be, debilitated by disease—but a young, delicate female, reclining on the couch, and nursed with all the tenderness

of maternal or sisterly attention. "The breath of heaven" is not allowed "to visit her face," lest its salutation should hail her "too roughly." Not an ache or pain is complained of, but sympathy hastens to relieve, if possible, by some medical application. The slightest attempt to put her feet to the ground is found impracticable, even though aided by the encircling arm of a kind father, and the assisting hand of devoted friendship. The pensive invalid still droops; and month after month rolls on, without any mitigation of her ailment. At length a pious stranger is introduced to the domestic circle, and the interest which every Christian feels, or ought to feel, in a pious stranger, is kindled in their minds. In grave and solemn accents, he asks the interesting patient, "Do you believe that God is able to heal you?" She replies in the affirmative. He prays with her. The pointed interrogation, the prayer, the thought of Divine omnipotence and goodness, rush conjointly into her heart, and thrill through every fibre of her frame. Emotions are excited of a character perfectly

pure, and, at the same time, as perfectly influential as passions of a less unequivocal kind are known to be in numberless daily instances. "Believe," he says, "only believe" — and again he bends his knees in prayer for her restoration. "Did you not feel," he asks, "a strange sensation while I was praying, as if strength were diffused over you?" "I think I did," is her reply. "Then," he adds, "in the name of Jesus Christ, arise and walk." Excitement is now at its climax; and, by one powerful effort, she rises, stands, walks! This resolute plunging into active locomotion is the very remedy prescribed by Dugald Stewart, in his "Philosophy of the Human Mind," when pointing out the best correctives of a disordered imagination; and though the phrase, "a disordered imagination," may seem too strong to be applicable to some instances we have in view, yet there has doubtless existed, even in those instances, a degree, though in milder form, of the same complaint—a morbidity of the fancy, diffusing its enervating influence through the system, and which required

nothing more as a counteractive than some sufficiently powerful stimulant to revive and energize the latent powers of action.

The disease, however, may be real, and not in the slightest degree imaginary; and its sudden removal may, nevertheless, have nothing in it of the marvellous, except in appearance. We have recently heard of an individual who languished, for a considerable time, under some internal and debilitating sickness, which baffled all the efforts of professional skill, till at length the beloved patient sunk in exhaustion, and her happy spirit winged its flight to that region where suffering and death are no more. On a *post mortem* examination, it was found that all the vital parts were free from disease, and that the cause of death originated in a deranged state of one of the cartilages of the larynx—"which cause," it was observed by a medical friend of the family, "might have been removed, if there had been a possibility of ascertaining the precise nature of the case;" and he further added, "a strong cough, or sudden and violent emotion, might have proved a cure, by restoring the cartilaginous mem-

brane to its wonted state and proper action."* Here, then, is an instance in which, if it had

* In confirmation of what is here stated, we refer to Dr. Abercrombie's "Inquiries concerning the Intellectual Powers, and the Investigation of Truth," a work of singular interest and importance, which has just issued from the press, and which may be appealed to with confidence, on the ground of the distinguished talent and high professional character of the author. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of laying before our readers the following extract. "On this subject, we are especially to keep in mind the extensive class of diseases which are acted upon in a most powerful manner by causes entirely mental. These are, the numerous and ever varying maladies which are included under the terms dyspeptic, hypochondriacal, and nervous. Many of them have their origin in mental emotions which elude observation; and a very large proportion are entirely referable to indolence and inaction—to that vacuity of mind attending the unfortunate condition in which there is no object in life but to find amusement for the passing hour. When on patients of this description the dexterous empiric produces results which the scientific physician had failed to accomplish, we are too apt to accuse him, in sweeping terms, of practising upon their credulity. He, in fact, employs a class of remedies of the most powerful kind, to which the other, perhaps, attaches too little importance, namely, mental excitement and mental occupation—the stimulus of having something to hope, and something to do. Examples of this kind must have occurred to every practical physician. I

pleased God to interpose the requisite local excitement, and if it had been possible for us

have known a young lady who had been confined to bed for months, and had derived no benefit from the most careful medical treatment, restored to health by the excitement of a marriage taking place in the family. Changes of circumstances, also, or misfortunes, which called for new and unusual exertion, have often been known to produce similar results; and it is a matter of old and frequent observation, that diseases of the nervous class disappear during periods of public alarm and political convulsion. Nor is it only on diseases of this nature that remarkable effects are produced by mental causes; for mental excitement is known to operate, in a powerful manner, on diseases of a much more tangible character. Dr. Gregory was accustomed to relate the case of a naval officer, who had been for some time laid up in his cabin, and entirely unable to move, from a violent attack of gout, when notice was brought to him that the vessel was on fire—in a few minutes he was on deck, and the most active man in the ship. Cases of a still more astonishing kind are on record. A woman mentioned by Diemerbroeck, who had been many years paralytic, recovered the use of her limbs when she was much terrified during a thunder storm, and was making violent efforts to escape from a chamber in which she had been left alone. A man affected in the same manner, recovered as suddenly when his house was on fire; and another, who had been ill for six years, was restored to the use of his paralytic limbs during a violent paroxysm of anger."—pp. 396, 397.

to judge of the case according to its true nature, we should have seen the folly and credulity of believing that every sudden cure must, of necessity, be miraculous. To regard such an event as a signal answer to prayer, where intercessions have been made, is, we are persuaded, neither credulous nor fanatical:—but then, let it not be vainly imagined that the Almighty has stepped out of the course of his ordinary procedure, by the employment of a new and extraordinary cause, to produce an effect within the reach of common means—which would make the thing a miracle, or supernatural operation. Let it not be deemed either unbelieving or unbecoming to trace the cure, as far as possible, to that natural cause which it has pleased the Lord to employ:—and for this end, let medical practitioners be consulted, which may tend to further the healing art, and render the benefit available in future cases of the kind. The investigation cannot prove any barrier to the direct and fervent thanksgivings of the restored patient to that divine and gracious Being "who healeth all our diseases;" and it will have this further

advantage, that it will stop the idle boasting of those who would fain use such a fact as a prop to their false notions of miraculous intervention.

We cannot, for a moment, suppose that any of the above remarks are liable, without the grossest injustice, to such misconstruction as to be made to bear upon the miracles of healing wrought by our Lord and his Apostles. Those miracles were performed in the presence of multitudes, by that Almighty Power which hushed, with a word, the jarring elements of nature; raised the widow's son from his funeral bier; and brought Lazarus again from the regions of the dead. Not only were those more signal miracles done in the sight of many witnesses, but of all who applied to Jesus for the aid of his healing virtue, not one individual was sent away without a cure. To affirm that these instances—various in kind, multiplied in number, instantaneous in effect, and never failing in success—can yet be accounted for on the same natural principles by which it is so easy to explain the rarely occurring wonders of our own times, would be a glaring and impious

absurdity. It might well be said to our Lord, as Nicodemus declared, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

But, to proceed—Miracles may infallibly be regarded as spurious, *when the person pretending to them has never wrought one positive indisputable act of the kind.* Never, perhaps, was there a more determinate struggle to pour contempt upon genuine miracles, by wresting from them the distinguishing attribute of supernatural agency, than in the case of the magicians of Egypt. The power of evil spirits appears to have been, to a certain extent, let loose at that period, as it was subsequently in the time of our Lord, for the purpose of affording a fuller demonstration of the exceeding riches of Divine grace, in the partial and typical subjugation of those principalities and powers which are confederate against the peace and prosperity of the church of God. The authority of Moses and Aaron was attested by signs and wonders sufficient, though not to convert, yet to convince the haughty monarch of Egypt, that they were delegates of Heaven:

and who can tell, but those earliest convictions of the mighty power of God which made him tremble, and send in haste for the Hebrew prophet, might have influenced him to let the people go, ere judgment after judgment swept over the land, and finally buried the martial hosts of Egypt in the overwhelming surges of the Red Sea? But lying spirits were at hand to ape the doings of Omnipotence. The magicians affected to despise the turning of a rod into a serpent; "and they did so, with their enchantments." What could Pharaoh say? What must he think? He knew that these sorcerers were not servants of the Hebrews' God; and yet they could perform similar signs. But did the Lord Jehovah leave himself without an undeniable witness? Nay, did he not make the very lips of those gainsayers to utter the acknowledgment, "*This is the finger of God?*"

The same may be said of our Lord's miracles: there was nothing in them of a suspicious character. The chief priests and Pharisees affected, indeed, to disbelieve them, and called him "a deceiver." Yet they could not feel quite easy on the subject, even after his

death and burial; but recollecting that he had said, "After three days I will rise again, they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch." And how did the event turn out? The incontrovertible fact of his resurrection was reported to them—not by the infatuated followers of the despised Galilean, but by the very guards whom they had stationed at the tomb. What, then, was to be done? Admit the truth they would not. To conceal it, there was but one method, that of putting a strange and self-contradictory story into the mouths of the soldiers, and bribing them liberally to disseminate a falsehood. This course they adopted; with what success let the faith and hopes of all believers certify—resting, as they have ever done, and still continue to do, upon that great miracle which has been aptly called the key-stone of the arch on which the whole superstructure of Christian truth depends.

Now, let us see whether modern miracles can bear the same sifting as those of Moses and Christ, from which they have suffered nothing, but have come forth with much additional

evidence of their reality. If the gift of tongues be actually imparted, according to certain pretensions made to the north of the Tweed, it will lose nothing by strict investigation and comparison with the circumstantials of that original gift of the kind which we have on record. How then does the matter appear, when placed side by side with apostolic precedents? Perhaps some dwellers in China have heard the inspired damsel, and understood her speech; and some Persians, too, may have listened to her accents, and recognized in them their mother tongue:— and, then, some poor Negroes may have gathered round her, and been struck with the sound of salvation in phraseology once familiar to their ears. Is it so? Then surely there must be truth in this! If the Chinese, and the Persians, and the swarthy Negroes, are not combining to deceive, here must certainly be a supernatural work! But whither is this pleasing imagination leading us? Are not the facts of the case directly the reverse? And are not the sounds articulated by Miss C. literally *unknown* tongues to all on earth, and even to *herself?* She seems to have entirely overlooked the

circumstance that the word "*unknown*" (1 Cor. xiv. 2.) is in *Italics*, and, therefore, not found in the Greek original; so that what the Apostles spoke were *known* languages, and not unintelligible jabber. But, on this subject, we shall adopt the words of a modern preacher, equally distinguished for wisdom, talent, and usefulness, in a Sermon on the Pentecostal Effusion of the Spirit, and the Gift of Tongues: "When the Apostles spake with tongues, there was no occasion to say to them, What does that mean?—Pray tell us.—Be so good to write down those words for us, that we may see the characters—and we will employ the learned to decipher them. No, it was quite unnecessary to send from Dan to Beersheba, and to make application to oriental scholars, and professors, and universities, at the distance of some hundred miles, in order to ascertain their meaning. The Apostles were understood by the multitudes, who surrounded them in groups: these not only heard the truth, but comprehended and believed it; and thus the Gospel was propagated in various languages. It is expressly said, that 'every man heard

them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?' And if any, in the present day, lay claim to the gift of tongues, let them use that gift to convey the knowledge of the wonderful works of God to the Chinese, or the Japanese, the African, the Hindoo, or some other unenlightened nation of the globe." Assuredly this would be far better than talking gibberish at home, to no other end than to be laughed at themselves, and to afford a convincing proof to the world that no sense and nonsense are convertible terms.

Again, miracles may be regarded as spurious, *when attempts fail before the pretension to miraculous power is fully substantiated.* That some unavailing attempts have been made to heal the sick and restore the lame, is very generally known, and, we believe, admitted even by the most thoroughly initiated in the school of wonders; but when these failures are adduced as an argument against the vain assumption of extraordinary powers, the answer is prompt, and to the point; "the disciples of

Christ," say they, "failed in one instance, and it was for want of faith." It is true, they did fail, and for the very reason thus assigned. But, consider what a warrant they had for the exercise of confidence. Our Lord had, in very deed, "given them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." They had express authority, commission, and command, to do these things; and when the apostles of our own day shall be possessed of equal credentials, they may be allowed to put their unsuccessful attempts in competition with those to which they so triumphantly appeal. Before, however, the Apostles of our Saviour were thus discomfited for their humiliation and the furtherance of their self-knowledge, faith, and dependence, they had given several *positive proofs* of a just claim to miraculous gifts; and so completely was their reputation established in reference to miracles, that the occasion of surprise was — not that they succeeded in performing them, though such instances doubtless excited a feeling of admiring wonder; but—that in one solitary instance, the case was

found too difficult for them. Accordingly, when the father of the poor lunatic failed in his application to the disciples, he came to Jesus, urging his suit in the language of almost expiring hope: "Lord, have mercy on my son. I brought him to thy disciples, but they could not cure him. If *thou* canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." How evident it is, that the inability of the disciples to perform this miracle had shaken the confidence with which the suffering and the sorrowful were ever wont to supplicate the aid of the Master; a clear proof that the miscarriage of the Apostles was no ordinary event! The use made of its single occurrence is not only unwarrantable, but preposterously arrogant. It is like the conduct of a mere rhymist, who, never having composed a single line worthy of the press, should console himself for his utter destitution of poetic genius by appealing to some occasionally unhappy turn, or defective line, in the finished productions of Milton, Pope, Dryden, or Cowper. Or we might compare it to the self-complacency of an unskilful general, who, having sustained defeat

upon defeat in a completely disastrous campaign, should institute a comparison between the total failure of his own enterprise, and the trifling check occurring, it may be, in a single engagement, during the long and splendid military career of the hero of Waterloo. We trust that these few words may suffice to show how incongruous it is to cite a solitary instance of discouragement in the experience of the Apostles, when analogy so entirely fails in the present day, for want of one demonstrative exhibition of that power which was so unquestionably displayed by the primitive followers of Christ.

But further, miracles may be regarded as spurious *when they are employed to prove any thing, either inconsistent with written revelation, or so trifling in its nature as to be unworthy of the Divine interposition in a way of supernatural manifestation.* There is much beauty in consistency when connected with what is good and great. With this quality, a man of fine principles is sure to command respect: without it, even virtue loses half her charms. There is a lovely consistency dis-

played in the several parts of God's creative workmanship. The structure of the heavens; the formation of the earth; the adjustment of the human frame; and every other production of the Divine hand, is in strict accordance with the character of the Creator. "He is the rock; his work is perfect." Whatever is defective in its results, is owing to the supervention of evil from another source; and those jarring notes which often break upon the ear, prove only that the harp of heaven is marred by the erring touch of mortals. The works and words of Infinite Wisdom ever agree with each other in substance and design; and we may settle it in our minds, as a rule of discernment, that whatever militates against the *written Word of God* cannot be matter of *private revelation from Him*: "He cannot deny himself." Now, we are given to understand, by the advocates of modern inspiration, that the confirmation of truth was not the design of miracles. We know not whether this sentiment be entertained on the authority of a supposed immediate communication from Heaven to that effect; but it certainly forms an important point at issue be-

tween the established opinion which has been allowed to prevail universally for ages past, and that new light on the subject, without the diffusion of which new miracles would be likely to obtain but a poor reputation. If the idea which they thus impugn were of human devising, and rested not on divine authority, neither its antiquity, nor universal currency, nor any imaginable charm with which it could be invested, should prevail with us to tolerate or spare it; but this, we are confident, is by no means the case. The assertion, that it "is founded on the precept of man, and not on the testimony of Scripture,"* will appear, from numerous passages of Holy Writ, to be altogether a misrepresentation. "And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee. And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent: and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto

* Gifts of the Spirit, p. 5.

Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: *That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers*, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, *hath appeared unto thee*," Exod. iv. 1—5. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not *believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign*," &c. ver. 8, 9; vide also ver. 30, 31, of the same chapter; and vii. 9; xiv. 31. Thus, the miracles of Moses were the appointed means of removing the incredulity of the Hebrews as to the truth of his message, and the certainty of his divine commission. Let us now turn to the New Testament: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, *the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me*," John v. 36. "*Though* ye believe not me, *believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*," x. 38. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, *or else believe me for the very works' sake*,"

xiv. 11. In these words our Lord called upon the Jews to receive his infallible declaration respecting his Divine nature and mission, and to believe the mysterious union existing between his essence and that of the Father; and then he tells them that if bare testimony should be insufficient to convince them of these momentous truths, they would find, in the miracles he had wrought, an abundant confirmation of his character and claims. The above quotations are so apposite, that it is hoped the consideration of them will fortify the mind of the reader against the insidious misstatement to which we have alluded. It remains, then, to be examined, whether modern miracles confirm any important article of faith, or whether their scope is not as trivial as the imagination which gives rise to them is vain and deceptive. The supposed gift of healing, as exhibited in two or three instances, the nature of which has already come under review, cannot add any additional confirmation to the Gospel, for that is amply attested by miracles of a far higher order. If, indeed, they could be irrefragably established as genuine, they would prove that Miss Camp-

bell of Fernicarry is inspired, that Mr. M'Donald of Port Glasgow has the gift of interpretation;—in short, that the age of miracles is not past. But, as the manifestations of Omnipotence have never borne the character of mere display, without some moral and practical design connected with immediate circumstances, it would be interesting and profitable to ascertain what is the Divine message, or instructive lesson, which the present extraordinary shedding forth of gifts is intended to ratify. We are told that they are for edification:* but it is obvious, no man can be edified by what he does not understand. The whole materia for edification to be found in these miraculous performances amounts to this: a young lady is suddenly raised from her bed of languishing, and is enabled to walk and leap, to speak in accents of which she knows not the meaning, and to write characters which neither the learned nor unlearned can comprehend. And do these things really edify? The word *edification*, from οἰκοδομέω, signifies the *building up*, or advancement of the soul in knowledge, faith, and holiness.

* Gifts of the Spirit, p. 5.

Now, the sudden cure of a young lady might edify us, if it established any truth of God, by which the graces of the Spirit were brought into exercise. As an interposition of Providence, by natural means, it might have the effect of edifying, by calling forth the gratitude and love, and some of those sensitive emotions which religion chastens, refines, and renders subservient to moral and spiritual improvement: but, *as a miracle*, it wants the first essential to edification, viz., the accompanying communication of something important to be known; without which, faith has no object for its grasp, and holiness no incentive to its progress.

Finally, miracles may be regarded as spurious *when there is evidently no occasion for them.* The works of the Almighty display no prodigality of strength. The vigour of the oak is not lavished on the delicate tendrils of the vine; neither is the silken-winged butterfly endued with the force of the terrific lion. Proportion, limitation, and singular adaptation are discoverable throughout the wondrous economy of nature; and when we behold the operations

of the creative hand, it is impossible, without the grossest perversity, to deny, that what God hath wrought is

"Wisest, holiest, fittest, best."

These qualities of wisdom, holiness, fitness, and perfection, are manifested not only in the material world, but in the structure and component parts of the great scheme of human redemption. The revelation of that scheme exhibits a true picture of man's fallen, apostate condition; manifests the purity, extent, and strict requirements of the Divine law; shows the utter inadequacy of human efforts to recover the forfeited boon of life; publishes the glad tidings of a free and full salvation; delineates the finished work of an atoning, rising Saviour; points out the harmonious combination of Divine justice, holiness, truth, love, and mercy, in the method of human restoration; records the promise of the Holy Spirit's influence to sanctify the degenerate nature of the sinner; reveals a resurrection to eternal blessedness; and opens a glorious prospect through eternity in the final mediatorial reward of our Divine and exalted Redeemer. These doctrines,

with their practical uses, constitute the all-important themes of that Sacred Book which is given to be our light in a dark world; our guiding star to the manger, the cross, and the celestial throne; our rule; our compass; our chart; our support; and our exhaustless treasury. Can any one, in the broad view of these revealed truths, charge us with arrogance for maintaining the *sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures?* It would not be deemed either presumptuous, or gratuitous, to affirm that there is no occasion for another sun, emerging from the western horizon, to assist our solar orb in its luminous course from the east, and to pour fresh floods of light on the already irradiated scenes of nature. The spirit of such assertions would be decidedly reprehensible, if couched in a form that should seem to prescribe limits to the power or sovereignty of the Most High. But when we say, that the *fulness* of Divine communication in the Sacred Scriptures supersedes the necessity of further visions, and private revelations, and all kinds of miraculous interposition, the sentiment, so far from being derogatory to the Great Head of the church, is

honourable alike to his wisdom and liberality. It also reflects the highest dignity on the Bible, as the work of the Spirit, by whose inspiration "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, is now made manifest to his saints," and so fully displayed in all "the riches of its glory," as to render it impossible for the pseudo-miracles of the nineteenth century to add any thing either to its purport or validity. We are by no means afraid of the ominous word "use," notwithstanding that, in a certain quarter, it has called forth such an eloquent burst of reprobation: "O! that word 'use' has a lie in it, and a poison in it, with which the children of this world poison their souls, whilst they think that they are acting wisely."* It would be far more in accordance with sober judgment, and the strain of the evangelic writers, to argue; that word "use" has a verity, and a beauty, and a propriety in it, which, if duly considered, would preserve men from thinking, speaking, writing, and acting unwisely. It is demonstrably certain that the Apostle Paul employed it without any ap-

* Gifts of the Spirit, p. 18.

prehension that prejudice would denounce it as false and fatal, for he even represents believers as "sanctified and meet for the Master's *use*:" and in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus, he wrote thus: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the *use* of edifying:" further, he expressly stated in his letter to Titus, that good works are to be maintained "for *necessary uses*." To contend earnestly for a legitimate application of apostolic phraseology, is widely different from "striving about words to no profit;" we say, therefore, let the language thus stigmatized be fairly examined, and it will prove "sound speech, that cannot be condemned."

The field that has been traversed in the preceding pages, is so extremely extended in the length and breadth of it, that we have necessarily been cursory in our notice of each successive object as it has passed in review before us. The hints that have been suggested, however, may furnish matter for contemplation; and the condensed view of the argument which they present to the mind, may enable some in-

dividuals to arrive at a sober and settled conclusion on the subject. Our endeavour has been, not so much to detect those minuter sophistries which would have involved useless, if not invidious personality of remark; but to place truth in juxtaposition with fallacies of the imagination, and to give such a connected representation of the nature, design, and features of genuine miracles, as should have the effect of unveiling those of an opposite character.

Reader, it is possible that your fancy may be dazzled with the religious novelties of the day, and that you may be gazing on them with mingled awe and interest. "Here," say you, "is something sublime, worthy of the Gospel, worthy of God! This commends itself to our senses: it is *tangible*." Allow us, ere we close, to ask you, "Are ye not carnal," when your judgment is swayed by what is *sensible*, in connexion with a religion that is *spiritual*, and that has to do with unseen realities, far transcending, in true sublimity and interest, any class of objects which our senses are capable of embracing? Be persuaded to examine the prin-

eiples upon which you are proceeding. If the supposed intimations of the Spirit within you, and the exercise of what are called miraculous gifts, lift you above the Scriptures—which are the only inspired record of the Divine will, the only unerring standard to which judgment, conscience, and feeling may appeal, and the sole law by which those who live under the Gospel are to be judged at the last day—then, depend upon it, you are in danger of a ruinous beguilement; and though you may be professedly "a man of God," yet beware, lest that affecting narrative which exhibits the disastrous consequences of listening to lying words, pretending to be from the Lord, though in direct opposition to the known and determinate mind of the Spirit, should find its counterpart in your soul's sad and everlasting history. "And behold, there came a man of God out of Judah, *by the word of the Lord*, unto Beth-el. . . And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go with thee, neither will I

eat bread nor drink water in this place: *for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord*, saying, Eat no bread nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el. Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. And their father said unto them, What way went he? for his sons had seen what way the man of God went which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass; and he rode thereon, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? and he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor

drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, *I am a prophet also as thou art;* and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water, *but he lied unto him.* So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. . . . And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it; the lion also stood by the carcass. And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass: and they came and told it in the city, where the old prophet dwelt. And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God *who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord:* therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him. . . . And he laid his carcass in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother!"

Chap. III.

ON PARDON.

" When angry most he seem'd and most severe,
What else but favour, grace, and mercy shone?"

The Gospel is a grand moral expedient for the recovery of fallen man. Sin had thrown a barrier in the way of favourable access to Jehovah, which could be removed only by the intervention of a sacrifice of infinite value. The self-originating love of God, unsolicited and undesired on the part of our rebellious race, provided a propitiatory offering of sufficient efficacy to atone for the sins of the whole world. The method which infinite wisdom devised for the pardon of sin and the restoration of the sinner, secured at once the inviolable purity of the divine character, the strict equity of an immutable law, and the most illustrious exhibition of all the moral attributes of Deity, harmonising, blending, and diffusing their commingled glories

over the reviving destiny of an apostate and ruined world. There is nothing now pertaining to the moral government of God to hinder any transgressor from returning to Him by the one "new and living way" of consecrated appointment: hence the invitations of grace are free, and the proclamations of mercy boundless. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and *he that hath no money*, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, *without money* and *without price*." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And *whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*."

The unconditional freeness of salvation is a point of surpassing interest to every mind that is enlightened to perceive the utter defectibility of human nature, and the infrangible sanctions of that law which involves in condemnation, and brings under penalty, the perpetrator of a single act of deviation from its just and salutary requirements. And it strikes the reflecting mind as a blessing of peculiar magnitude, that a truth so essential to the kindling of hope, the

eliciting of confidence, and the invigorating of faith, should be inscribed on the sacred pages with the same clearness and legibility which, in ancient times, distinguished the index marked on the sign-posts for the guidance of the unfortunate manslayer. This was the subject of prophetic allusion, "Write the vision," said the Lord to his servant Habakkuk, "and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it:" in other words, let the sign *refuge* be marked in such visible characters, and the pointing hand be so conspicuously discernible, that when the fugitive shall read the inspiring direction, he may run with redoubled alacrity, from the firm persuasion that he has not mistaken the road that is to conduct him to the desired place of safety. The feeling of encouragement, thus inspired, bears but a faint analogy to that confidence which the sin-afflicted heart derives from the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If the precious invitations and promises of the new covenant had been presented to us in dark or symbolical language, how often would perturbation of mind arise

from the apprehension of not rightly understanding them, and how easy would it be for those who are fond of appearing wise "above that which is written," to perplex us with their new lights and forced constructions, and thus to bewilder our judgments and undermine our peace. But, thanks be to God! though they who are wise in their own conceits, may stumble in the darkness of their vain imaginations, "the way-faring men, though fools" in point of human erudition, "shall not err."

It is, nevertheless, a lamentable fact, that several points of faith, in themselves the most simple, unclogged, and explicit that are to be found within the compass of revelation, have either been subjected to some fallacious process of ratiocination, or loaded with the fetters of some speculative system, till their native beauty and simplicity have been veiled in obscurity, or lost amid the exhalations of enthusiasm. Amongst these, the subject of *pardon* has been, in no small measure, despoiled of its genuine import and legitimate application: while the favourite view of its universal extension, as entertained by a modern writer of cele-

brity, has been presented to the public so invested with the embellishments of partial truth, imaginative illustration, and pathetic diction, as to give to the whole representation that character of enchantment, which renders error so much the more influential, because plausible and unsuspected. This extravagant notion would, we are persuaded, be speedily corrected, or, at any rate, would fail to gain proselytes, if due attention were paid to the real meaning of words and phrases: for instance, what a want of accuracy is discoverable in the following statement: "a sense of pardon, or justification, belongs to those who believe the testimony!"* Are we, then, to understand that a sense of pardon and justification mean one and the same thing? The confusion of ideas evinced in this proposition is of more importance than, at first view, it may appear; because it is calculated to show, that the theory supported by this loose kind of argument, and by a combination of terms so irrelative, that they never can be made to synonymize, must be founded in vague and ill-digested hypotheses.

* Erskine's Freeness of the Gospel, p. 61.

It is not our intention to discuss with minuteness, nor to notice every thing that has been said in support of the doctrine of universal pardon, which has already been controverted, critically, and at some length, in several specific treatises: but in order to give a concise view of the argument, and to show how wild and untenable it appears when contrasted with the sobriety of Scripture representation, we shall define the true nature of pardon; exhibit its abundant provision, and the means of its procurement; point out its limited application; and give prominence to some of the strong objections which the Bible furnishes to the belief of its universality.

Pardon, in the sense in which it is used in the Gospel, is the conferment of a free and full remission of sins, and a complete cancelment of the guilt contracted by their perpetration. A very ingenious and accurate distinction has been made in our hearing, between *pardon* and *forgiveness*: the former being the one act of royal mercy, by which a criminal who has incurred the forfeiture of life to the laws of his country, is spared and acquitted; the latter

expressing the oft-repeated act of a father towards an erring but repentant child; hence, the criminal is pardoned, and the child forgiven. The words in question, however, are not always employed in the Bible with this distinctiveness of application; and though the respective definitions are strictly appropriate, not the slightest confusion of thought results from the Scripture interchange of the terms. Pardon is not precisely the same as justification. The latter is a forensic term, denoting more than the mere absolving of a criminal from the penalty due to his transgression of the law. It conveys the idea of his acquittal, not as an act of mercy, but on the ground of his actual innocence, or of equivalent satisfaction made to the law by some substitutionary expedient. In other words, it is the act by which a sinner is accounted righteous before God, brought into a state of acceptance "in the Beloved," and furnished with a plea that shall for ever secure him from falling into condemnation. Pardon and justification, though abstractedly distinguishable from each other, are identified by a connection so close and

indissoluble, that pardon is essential to a justified state, and justification an inseparable concomitant of pardon. The one removes a charge, the other affords a claim; the one relieves from death, the other adjudges to life; the one closes the gate of hell, the other opens the portals of heaven; and these are consociate effects of that grace by which sinners are brought over from the ranks of rebellion, and reinstated in the favour of the Most High.

When Satan, prompted by hatred to the works of God, and an envious wish to wrest from the first human pair that attribute of holiness which rendered them unutterably blest, had accomplished his malicious design, the eternal purpose of the Divine mind to institute a remedial scheme for the recovery of ruined man, was intimated in the symbolical promise of a suffering, yet triumphant Deliverer. This announcement contained the element of pardon, and the spring of hope to believers in the patriarchal age. Amid the thorns and thistles that beset their path, this tree of life was planted for the revival of their spirits, and no flaming sword barred their

access to its healing leaves. Abel saw its budding beauties, and derived a specific virtue from its unctuous droppings; Abraham rejoiced in spirit when he looked forward to its luxuriant growth and fruitfulness; and kings and prophets sat successivcly beneath its ever-spreading shade. At length the season of maturity arrived, "the fulness of the time" when the promises of grace ripened into fulfilment. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, *that we might receive* the adoption of sons;" and the wondrous advent of Messiah was proclaimed in accents of "peace," "good will," and "glory," which burst upon the human ear from the voices of cherubic legions. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world, through him, *might be saved.*" But how was this great and glorious project of Omnipotent Love to be accomplished? How was He, who is emphatically the Just One, to become the justifier of the ungodly, without the least violation of his holiness, the slightest dishonour to his law, or the remotest possibility

of detriment to the interests of his government? It was essentially necessary that an atonement of infinite value should be made for the injury done to the Divine Majesty by the rebellion of creatures who had broken through every tie of natural, moral, and spiritual obligation to obedience. Man had ruined himself; and the endless sufferings of the whole fallen race would have been no more than the measure of their just demerit for withholding the allegiance due to Jehovah. But "the Lord spake in vision," saying, "I have laid help on one that is mighty." "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly;" and by the boundless virtue of his propitiatory sacrifice, arising out of his Divine dignity, spotless purity, and meritorious self-devotement to the accomplishment of his Father's will, opened a way of reconciliation alike honourable to God and safe to man. Provision has thus been made for the pardon, regeneration, and everlasting bliss of every sinner "who believeth in Jesus," and an inviolable connection established between the belief of the truth, and the experience of its moral and saving efficacy. "Be it known

unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him *all that believe are justified* from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The preaching of forgiveness, however, does by no means involve the idea, that every one to whom the proclamation is addressed, is actually pardoned. A message may be faithfully delivered, and yet fail of its effect, in so far as it is rejected; and if they who disregard it do in fact lose "the benefit" * of the communication, we are at a loss to understand how they can have "a virtual participation" † in the substance of it. We know that when Paul delivered the above declaration concerning the medium of pardon and justification, the Gentiles were so deeply impressed, that they requested it might be repeated in their hearing; whereas, many of the unbelieving Jews retired from the synagogue in disgust. Now, if the forgiveness thus promulged is to be viewed in the light of a general amnesty, or proclamation to this effect, that in consequence of the death

* Ibid. p. 37. † P. 133.

of Christ, every individual sinner is truly pardoned, whether he be sensible of it or not, then we have no alternative, but to conclude that those impenitent Jews, who withdrew from the solemn assembly to go and use their influence in raising a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, in order to effect their expulsion from the neighbourhood, were, nevertheless, *pardoned* sinners. We may be told that they had not "the benefit of the pardon," but that "the pardon itself" existed, "laid up in Christ Jesus, and depending on nothing but the unchangeable character of God:"* in other words, that they possessed "a useless pardon!"† But in what a murky cloud of inconsistencies is the subject veiled, by phraseology which represents a purpose of the Divine mind as liable to fail in efficiency, and an absolute act, "as unchangeable as the character of God," yet nullified in its results.

From a perusal of Mr. Erskine's Essays, the component parts of which are like "iron mixed with miry clay," one portion so excellent in strength, and another so totally devoid of

* P. 133. † P. 132.

consistency, we have been led to the conclusion, that the author devised his theory of universal, abstract, inefficient pardon, from a principle of jealousy respecting that all-important doctrine—the freeness of salvation. His mind has evidently laboured to place the subject of pardon in such a light as should render it impossible to attach any idea of merit to faith, or repentance, or any other act of the mind expressive of its acceptance of the Gospel. Accordingly, he has depicted pardon as "laid down at our door,"* like some poor, hapless, unacknowledged foundling, lest by admitting the ordinary representation of it as a proffered boon, it should be vainly imagined, that there is some virtue in the act of stretching out an empty hand to grasp the inestimable prize. It is thus that the weak fears of men, tinctured with much of the loveliness of piety, have induced many an endeavour to pour fresh light upon the Bible by explaining, arranging, systematizing, and bringing every thing to the mould so ingeniously framed for exhibiting some new and infallible impress of the truth.

* P. 131.

But we ought not thus to tremble for the ark of God; still less to distort or mutilate any portion of truth under an idea of guarding it from supposed liability to misconception of another kind.

The error is not peculiar to the present case; it is one of common occurrence in the religious world, and especially prevalent amongst a certain class, who, in their excessive and undiscriminating zeal for the doctrine of faith without works, run into all those hyper-Calvinistic extravagancies of representation, which foster the native licentiousness of the heart, bring just reproach upon themselves, and occasion a most unmerited stigma to be cast on the article of free grace. Truth is like the sun—a centre, from which light diverges in all directions; one beam darts its radiance over the region of principle; another ray shoots athwart that of practice. Hence, if our views of the Christian system are in accordance with truth, we shall be under no temptation to distance or explain away the unconditional freeness of Divine mercy, on the one hand; nor, on the other, to shudder at its practical

deductions, as symptoms of graceless legality. It will prove of immense utility, as a preservative from abounding errors, if we keep in mind as a settled principle, that every part of truth is, more or less, essential to the perfection of the whole; and that the prominence given to any one part should never be connected with the neglect or obscuration of the rest.

Another instance of this kind of contracted partiality is conspicuous in those who maintain ultra views of the doctrine of particular redemption. These men are at the very antipodes from Mr. Erskine. The devout attachment which they entertain for the apostolic doctrine of election, so obscures their view of the illimitable worth of that blood which "cleanseth from all sin," that they are perpetually representing the work of Christ as an exact equivalent for the ransom of an elect number of the human race. In support of this tenet, they contend that it is dishonourable to the Lord Jesus Christ to suppose, that he ever did or suffered any thing in vain; and that if he died for all, then, since all are not saved, his death must, so far, prove invalid. But in what page

of the Sacred Volume is such a narrow-minded, bargaining idea of equivalence for a specific amount of debt to be found, disfiguring the grand and Godlike constitution of the Gospel? And how is it that the advocates of this sentiment never reflect on the extreme dishonour done to the Saviour, in the implied idea that he is capable of mocking the wretched children of despair, by issuing invitations of love and promises of pardon to the whole family of mankind, when, according to their hypothesis, there is not a sufficiency of moral virtue in his death and righteousness to redeem one single sinner beyond the precise number of the elect for whom he became responsible? That God has an elect people is a glorious and indispensable truth; for such is the wilful blindness and obduracy of the unrenewed heart, and so powerful the resistance of pride against a method of recovery which levels the towering notions of human merit, and gives to Jehovah all the glory of his own redeeming work, that without the intervention of sovereign mercy, not one sinner of the lapsed myriads of our world would be found willing to accept of life

on terms of humiliation and dependence. Hence it has been excellently stated, that "the design of election is not to exclude any from embracing the Gospel, but to prevent all from rejecting it." But the doctrine needs not that show of countenance, which it may be presumed to gain by detraction from the unmeasured fulness of the atonement. It would be unwarrantable to say, that the salvation of only one soul would have required less than the costly offering which has been presented; yet such is the plenitude of essential dignity and worth comprised in that offering, as fully to authorize the assertion, that the salvation of a universe of fallen worlds would require no more, if stamped with Divine appointment to that end. The brazen serpent (a distinguished type of the medium of salvation) was erected in the camp of Israel, as a means of cure to all the wounded; yet it availed only in the instance of those who believed the Divine declaration concerning it. If the whole camp had forborne to look, their unbelief would not have detracted, in the smallest degree, from the sufficiency of the remedy. Its adaptation

remained in force to the greatest imaginable extent of its application, subject to no intrinsic limitation, and only restricted in its efficiency, when, in any case, its healing virtue was despised.

But we cannot withdraw from the view of the brazen serpent, without observing how impressive is the fact, that the same divine symbol meets, with its corrective influences, the two opposite extremes of error. For whilst, as a remedial expedient, it significantly prefigured a salvation capable of being extended as far as the ravages of moral disease, its analogy proves no less forcibly, that as the wounded, dying Hebrews were not healed until they looked at the appointed emblem, so neither are sinners pardoned until they, by faith, "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." The tenour of the appointment respecting the brazen serpent ran thus: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."* Now let us just imagine that, upon the announcement being made, one of the poor

* Numbers xxi. 8.

suffering Israelites began to harangue his countrymen in these terms: "Self is the axis on which man turns, and the root out of which he grows. And he can scarcely avoid falling into this error in some measure, if he thinks there is no cure for him until he looks. For if the cure does not exist until he looks, and immediately exists when he does look, surely his looking has something to do in making it. It is in vain to tell him that looking does not make it, but only receives it. For he may ask, Where is it, then, before looking receives it? If my looking only receives it, it must have been in existence before my looking. The only idea that I can attach to the expression, receiving the cure by looking, is looking on the cure; but in order to this, the cure must have been a real cure before. If the brazen serpent, as it is erected on the pole, actually includes my cure, then it is clear, that when I look to the brazen serpent, I shall also see my cure as a part of it, and thus my looking will receive the cure. But if the brazen serpent does not in itself contain my cure, how can my looking to the brazen serpent be a receiving of the

cure?"* Such a strain of argument would doubtless have excited much astonishment and speculation throughout the camp; but we can scarcely imagine that any individuals would have been weak enough to believe that every sufferer was in immediate possession of an actual cure, and yet could have no "sense" of the immense change thus wrought in his condition prior to his using the prescribed means. Would it not have been too trifling to confound the cure itself with the method of recovery? and is it not equally absurd to endeavour to annihilate the distinction between pardon and the provision made for its exercise?

The main mistake which has given rise to this false reasoning of the universalist, consists in the low ideas which he entertains of the essential properties of pardon. He represents it as a spiritual gift, which a man may not only hear of, but have in possession, without its necessarily producing the slightest moral influence upon him: it is also described as "a fund of Divine love," &c.; in short, every one of the figures employed to illustrate it, alike fails

* Vide Essays, p. 126.

to convey a just view of the positive, impressive, and modifying power of pardon; they are all applicable to the general proclamation of pardon, but not to the individual conferment of it; and so far from recognising that it contains within itself the germ of holiness, happiness, and heaven, they symbolize with the extraordinary statement, that "a man may be thoroughly and for ever miserable, although he has this pardon."* It is evident, however, that the testimony of Scripture is at total variance with this arbitrary disseverment of pardon from its inseparable accidents—purity and bliss. "Blessed," said the Psalmist, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." According to this inspired declaration, who, we ask, are blessed? All men indiscriminately? All must be so, if all are forgiven. But can it, with any semblance of truth, be affirmed, that all mankind are indeed blessed? Is the swearer blessed? or the drunkard? or the profligate? or the proud?

* Essays, p. 144.

or the covetous? or the liar? or the hypocrite? or the self-righteous? Truly, if these characters are to be pronounced pardoned, while in a state of unregeneracy, our judgment will be too nearly allied to that of the scoffers in the days of Malachi; "And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are delivered." But be it remembered, that a curse was threatened against the individual who should remove his neighbour's landmark (Deut. xxvii. 17); and it ought to be matter of grave consideration, whether it be a crime of less magnitude to shift the demarcations of doctrinal truth, and subvert the appropriate distinctions of moral state and character.

The Apostle Paul makes a very remarkable distinction (2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20,) between the *objects* of reconciliation and the *subjects* of it. The objects of it are those for whose benefit the message was to be promulgated—"the world;" the subjects of it, those to whom the Gospel had been made the power of God unto salvation—"us," i. e., his fellow apostles, of whom, in connection with himself, he was then

writing. Accordingly, when referring to the latter, he declares, "God *hath reconciled us* to himself by Jesus Christ," &c.; here was the act of indemnity passed, the mercy sealed, the pardon realized. But in the very next verse, he gives an epitome of the Gospel which was to form the subject of his ministry, to wit, "that God was in Christ *reconciling the world* unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," evidently conveying the idea of a continual series of effects resulting from the finished work of the Saviour, and carried on by the powerful application of the truth to the consciences and hearts of those, who, through successive periods, should be made partakers of the pardoning grace of God. And in strict keeping with this idea are the words of entreaty which follow: "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, *be ye reconciled* to God." The strain of apostolic argument in this passage proves, that not even the shadow of pardon, or name of being reconciled, belongs to any sinner, until the message of mercy takes effect upon his heart in a

believing view of Christ Jesus, as all his salvation and all his desire. Had it been otherwise, Paul, who addressed so many large and promiscuous assemblies, would certainly, on some one occasion at least, have expressed himself to this effect: Ye, sinners of Antioch, are all pardoned: ye, superstitious Athenians, and all men equally ignorant of the true God, whom you worship under the title of the Unknown, are nevertheless in a state of forgiveness, though you know it not; "condemnation is exhausted;" "the amnesty is universal," &c. But where is any such language to be found in his discourses or writings? It is true he says, (Rom. viii. 1) "There is, therefore, now no condemnation"—but to whom? to the unbelieving world? to all mankind? No; but "to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Here, then, is an obvious connection between state and character; and the sacred writer does not appear to have been at all alarmed at this connection, as though he might be supposed to insinuate, that believers are freed from condemnation *because* they walk after the Spirit.

The exhibition, however, which this passage presents to our view, of the infallible diagnostics of a state of freedom from condemnation, proves, by a necessary consequence, that without these accompanying evidences such a state cannot possibly exist; and hence the sentiment, that "condemnation is exhausted," is not, and cannot be, of universal application. It will be admitted, we presume, that where condemnation is no more, the *cause* of condemnation has been removed. Now, what is the cause of condemnation? Not the sin of our first parents; for, in so far as their posterity are involved in the ruin consequent upon their disobedience, "the free gift has come upon all men, unto justification of life," by the acceptance of which, every sinner who hears the Gospel, may be reinstated in the enjoyment of the lost favour of our God. Under the Christian economy, therefore, the only remaining ground of condemnation is personal rebellion, manifested in *unbelief*, and its corresponding fruits. The question then occurs, was unbelief exhausted by some one act of mediatorial intervention? If so, then condemnation must have been exhausted by the

same act. But does not experience show, that unbelief is removed in each particular instance, by a separate and personal work of grace on the heart of the new convert? And do we not see one individual after another stepping forth from the ranks of a rebel host, and enlisting under the banners of the great "Leader and commander of the people" of God? This view of the matter accords precisely with the declaration of our Lord, "He that believeth is not condemned; but he that believeth not *is condemned already*, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." These words contain a distinct recognition of two opposite conditions—a state of virtual condemnation, and a state of freedom from condemnation—existing coevally, though attaching to different subjects. No stress can be laid on the argument, that when our Lord uttered them, the work of redemption was not yet consummated by the one great offering which was to exhaust condemnation; for it is evident from the whole tenour of Scripture, that the death of Christ had an antecedent as well as a prospective influence, and that faith never, at

any period, failed to derive from Him such a measure of objective virtue, as freed the soul from the condemnatory power of the law. But in no instance or degree is that virtue represented as extended to all mankind, irrespective of the faith by which alone it can be received. On the contrary, sinners are uniformly exhorted to this effect: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out*, since times of refreshing have come from the presence of the Lord:" "Whosoever believeth in him *shall receive remission of sins*:" "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:" declarations the very reverse of that which affirms that "*all* men are forgiven."*

If the light of Divine truth thus thrown upon the subject should happily prove convincing, it must be superfluous to insist, at large, on the dangerous tendencies of the dogma of universal pardon. To say that it can do no good, is falling far short of what faithfulness requires: it is unquestionably injurious; be-

* Essays, p. 54.

cause nothing in religion can be harmless, if it be not fairly deducible from Divine precept or apostolic precedent. There is a boundary line here, which cannot be overstepped without landing us, at once, in the regions of error. Too much is said, even in the Christian world, about "things indifferent," and "non-essentials." Custom has given a sort of sanctity to the expressions; and a spurious kind of charity, widely different from that which "rejoiceth in the truth," has made it almost sacrilege to question whether any thing should be regarded as indifferent or non-essential, which either has the stamp of Divine authority on the one hand, or, on the other, no better sanctions than those of human ingenuity, policy, or expediency. But it is high time to withstand the practice of writing in golden characters, and holding up to the admiration of our liberal and sceptical age these newly-invented phrases and sentiments, which, if weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, are found utterly deficient in real solidity and value. Toleration, and liberty of private judgment, are the dearest rights of man; but to "call evil

good, and good evil," to "put darkness for light, and light for darkness," "bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," forms no part of the love we owe to our neighbour. "If any man seem to be contentious" in favour of that laxity of sentiment which allows these neutralizing epithets to be affixed to matters of religious faith or practice, "we have no such custom," neither had the Apostles, nor "the churches of God" in their day.

It is scarcely possible to calculate the baneful influences which erroneous views of pardon are likely to produce on two or three different classes of character. When *the man of the world*, in his more serious moments, takes up the Bible, and reads a portion of its sublime representations, heart-affecting narratives, or instructive discourses, it not unfrequently happens, that ere he is aware, a powerful, though it may be transient impression is made upon his mind: some hidden spring of feeling is touched, or some spark of conviction elicited; his passion for what is bold and figurative in description receives a momentary gratification from the prophetic page, or his taste for what

is tender and exquisite in friendship makes him melt in sympathy with David, when he lamented for Jonathan on the mountains of Gilboa; his conscience is suddenly roused by the charge, "Thou art the man;" or his grief-worn spirit momentarily responds to the soothing accents, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Whatever be the final result of such emotions, which, alas! too generally resemble "the morning cloud, and the early dew that passeth away," still the Bible is closed with a feeling of *respect*, which that blessed book has, in multiplied instances, extorted even at the hand of men who have sat down to its perusal with no other design than to ridicule and scoff at its sacred contents. But let a man of this description take up the Essays of Mr. Erskine, imagining, of course, that he will find in them the doctrines of the Bible, and what will be his feelings when he reads the grave assertion that all mankind are pardoned! He knows that this is not the case: he feels that it is *a lie*. Conscious in his in-

most soul that *he* is not pardoned, the declaration that he is so has no power to wring from his heart the secret admission, however reluctant, of what he there finds so irresistibly controverted. And, so far, this is just as it should be. The voice of truth, like that of God himself, penetrates the profoundest recesses of the human bosom, and calls forth, at least, a whisper of responsive acknowledgment to its dictates, even from the heart that is obdurately steeled against its saving impressions:—but not so the voice of error, which, though it be listened to as to a syren's song, with feelings of fascinating bewilderment, can never reach to awaken the deep-seated chord of conviction, which, even in fallen man, still vibrates to the sound of truth's celestial intonations. And what are the consequences of the repulsive action of this statement upon his mind? Morally incapable of perceiving the want of harmony existing between it and the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, he entertains a rising disgust against religion: he receives with avidity the unfounded impression, that Christianity is a mass of inconsistencies, framed by priestcraft, and unworthy of cre-

dence; his prejudices are confirmed; his Bible utterly neglected; his guilt increased; and his ruin accelerated. Let it not be said, that these are the effects of his natural depravity of heart:—they are so indeed, to a certain extent; but how fearfully augmented by the effusions of a pen, whose occasional strokes of fidelity and beauty render it the more lamentable, that it should ever be employed in tracing a single line calculated to mislead the judgment and pervert the heart!

Another description of character, on which we cannot but deprecate the influence of this notion of universal pardon, is *the licentious professor of religion.* He loves not Heaven for its holiness: to be secure of its exemptions from suffering forms the summit of his wishes. In fact, he scarcely cares for heaven, otherwise than as it may happen to stand associated with his escape from hell. Tell such a man that he is pardoned—it is enough. Preach to him the doctrine of eternal justification, which is but one step beyond that of universal reconciliation; yea, tell him that he was pardoned, justified, sanctified, and saved, not only before

ever he committed sin, but at a period antecedent to his very existence, and prior even to the creation of the world in which he moves—and he is abundantly satisfied; for this is doctrine which, to use his own words, *sets him at liberty*. An awful liberty!—a liberty to sin!—a liberty which frees his mind from the restraints of moral responsibility, and disarms "the judgment" of its salutary terrors. He loses the sense of his own individuality,* not in the overwhelming consciousness of his relation to and dependence upon the great Creator, but in his supposed mysterious connection with the hidden councils of eternity, to which he arrogantly appeals, as though they had been framed to convey to him—what he so much desires—a special charter to live as he lists, and yet to die the death of the righteous, and inherit the same final recompense of reward. We have observed an individual of this class enter a place of worship, in which the truths of Holy Writ are taught without any compromise, in all their harmony and extent. He came in at the commencement of the sermon, thereby

* Essays, p. 82.

too plainly proving the low estimation in which he held the devotional parts of the service, in which the united assembly offer their adorations, confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings. He gazed at the preacher with eager curiosity. Being invited to a seat in an adjoining pew, he declined to accept it. Several persons present, desirous of accommodating him, repeated the offer. At length, in order to free himself from this obliging importunity, he replied, "I want to hear whether he preaches *the Gospel*." Now, had the preacher been one of that class who proclaim "Peace, peace," when the Lord hath not said peace, or who alter the words of their commission, "Comfort ye, comfort ye *my people*," into "comfort ye *every sinner* of mankind," this lawless hearer would have remained till the close of the discourse, and, doubtless, have lavished much applause upon the herald of a salvation so congenial to his corrupt inclinations; but something was said of sin, and of its nature and consequences,—upon which he instantly turned upon his heel, and quitted the sanctuary, with an air that seemed to say,—That will not do for me.

Suffiee it to add, that the character of this person is well known in the neighbourhood, and it is distinctly legible in his Sabbath-day praetices, that he is a total stranger to that pardon which is imparted by the eleansing blood of our Divine Redeemer. Are Mr. E.'s Essays likely to undeceive him?

But the subjects on whom we especially deplore the influcnce of such an erroneous representation, are *young persons*, and *newly awakened converts* to religion. Their interest is keenly alive to every idea that bears upon the new and all-absorbing theme of their attention; but their judgment is not sufficiently exercised to enable them to diseriminate the blended hues and shades of diversified opinions, and to separate truth from its debasing associations. Their brow is adorned and defended with "the helmet of salvation," and they are daily girding on "the armour of rightcousness on the right hand and on the left;" but such is the unskilfulness of their first attempts to wield "the sword of the Spirit," that they are peculiarly liable to the successful assaults of their ever

watchful and malignant foes. Infidelity, opposition, and sarcasm, must be expected to beset their path: these, however, are by no means the most dangerous forms of adverse influence to which they are exposed. Satan is most formidable in his more insidious approaches; and ofttimes accomplishes, by stratagem, the enterprise in which he would be utterly defeated if he were to attempt it in hostile array. For who would deem it necessary to unsheathe his sword, and assume the attitude of defence in the presence of "an angel of light?" The very appearance of a messenger of salvation, a man of God, with a Bible in his hand, and prayer on his lips, is calculated to disarm criticism, to drown suspicion, and to relax the vigilance of fear. The wisdom and consistent orthodoxy of ancient ministers of the faith have reflected such dignity and lustre on their high profession, that we are accustomed to regard individuals who fill the sacred office of teachers as "the panoplied fore-front men in the battle of the Lord," in whom the slightest deviation from purity of doctrine or practice is a thing scarcely

to be believed, and as much a cause of public desolation "as when a standard-bearer fainteth." But in the present day, we have mournful occasion to regret, that many men of talent and official sanctity are so deeply tinctured with the love of novelty in religion, that almost every hour adds something to the teeming wonders of their inventive genius; so that, of necessity, the young must either stumble over the shapeless masses of new divinity that are industriously thrown across their path, or pine in bitter hopelessness of finding the right clue through that mazy labyrinth of intellectual entanglement, which has, of late, been planted around the temple of truth. And is it a small evil to perplex the thoughtful, to discourage the inquiring, and to involve multitudes in doubts and difficulties, from which they may be tempted, as the readiest mode of extrication, to force their way into the broad avenue of avowed scepticism and infidelity? Assuredly, the spiritual devices which produce such effects as these, are "vanity and the work of errors."

The best advice that can be given to the

young, under these inauspicious circumstances, is that of the prophet Jeremiah, vi. 16:— "Stand ye in the ways," i. e. in the ways of religion, "and see," or consider, "which is the right way; and ask for *the old paths*, where is the good way;" for among the many that may be pointed out to you, there is but one which is emphatically denominated *the good way;* "and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." "The old paths" are those traced by the saints of ancient times, and which our pious forefathers subsequently trod with safety and comfort, long ere the modern ways to Zion were choked, as they now are, almost to suffocation, with the rank weeds of unauthorised assurance, universal pardon, and other growths of nightshade which now infest the church of God. "Take heed," then, ye interesting and inexperienced disciples of the Lord, "take heed what ye hear" and what ye believe; for "the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy;" and

though the lies to which we have been referring may not be spoken in hypocrisy, nor with the base intention to deceive, yet their effects, if not prevented by timely caution and the delivering grace of God, may prove equally injurious, if not fatal, to your highest and holiest interests.

CHAP. IV.

ON PROPHECY.

"— Not to know at large of things remote
From use, obscure and subtle, but to know
That which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom: what is more, is fume,
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,
And renders us, in things that most concern,
Unpractised, unprepared, and still to seek."

Prophecy, *προφητεία*, in its etymological meaning, signifies *speaking before*, in reference either to persons or time; and, in its general acceptation, denotes the prediction or announcement of future events. The gift of prophecy was imparted under the Old Testament dispensation, to afford matter of believing anticipation to the church of God, and to lay a foundation for that species of attestation to the word of truth, so strikingly afforded by the subsequent fulfilment of its predictions. It

was likewise conferred, in a very limited degree, upon the primitive churches at the introduction of the Christian economy. We say in a very limited degree, because the word prophecy, as it occurs in the New Testament, has more frequently the general import of *teaching*, i. e. of *speaking before*, in reference to persons than to time. Indeed, only a comparatively small proportion of its sacred pages is occupied with the announcement of things to come. This assertion may be questioned by those who are wholly engrossed with the study of prophecy, to the exclusion of almost every other biblical theme; but we believe that, upon strict investigation, it will be found to be an accurate statement.

We are expressly informed, that the prophets were "moved by the Holy Ghost" to utter the deep and mysterious declarations of those things which formed the subjects of their predictions. The degree of insight which they enjoyed into the events and circumstantials which they foretold, varied, probably, in proportion to the strength of prophetic faith in each commissioned individual. Doubtless, all who were truly

inspired of God had, to a certain extent, a consistent perception of the general import and tendency of the divine effusions to which they gave utterance; though, as it respects their less-gifted hearers, an almost impervious veil of mystery was allowed, in most instances, to rest upon the matter of prophetic communication, for the purpose of exercising their submission, inquiry, hope, and waiting confidence, until Almighty power and providential interposition should, in due time, render the word of prophecy "more sure," as we read, 2 Pet. i. 19, *i. e.* more clearly developed and abundantly confirmed by its fulfilment.

The name of "seers" was given to the prophets, as expressive of the power bestowed on them to look into futurity, and to *see* some of the great and glorious events which should successively transpire in the history of the church. And whatever may have been the measure of personal understanding which accompanied their prophetic visions, one thing is certain, that they were perfectly acquainted with the distant bearing of what they published; "for unto them it was revealed, that

not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things" which are reported to us in the Gospel. That gross mistakes, both as to time and matter, were made by the mass of the Jewish nation in the interpretation of ancient and inspired predictions, is too palpably manifest from the worldly and political expectations, which even the most pious among them were perpetually cherishing, on the ground of some prophetic declaration: but this we shall have further occasion to notice, in our intended comparison of those expounders of prophecy with a similar class existing in our own day.

The study of prophecy is deeply interesting, and if pursued according to just principles, and in a proper spirit, cannot fail to produce moral impressions of a highly beneficial order. The prophets and saints of old were devoutly occupied with its investigation. Of the former it is recorded, that they "inquired and searched diligently," "searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" and, whilst they mused on its sublime

significance, the fire of holy awe and ardent affection burned within them, consuming that power of earthly influence, which, by nature, binds man so adhesively to this vain world.

The principles on which this study should be pursued, are those of critical interpretation, Scripture analogy, and strict impartiality. We say, in the first place, *critical interpretation*, because, unless a student of prophecy be competently acquainted with the original languages of Scripture, and with the genuine phraseological import of symbolical terms and figurative representations, it is impossible for him to make any real advances in the knowledge of the subject; on the contrary, he is, and must remain, on the same level with the simple, pious herdsman, in his lowly cot, who reads, wonders, and adores, while in spirit he rejoices that the love of God is inscribed in language which his unlettered mind can easily comprehend. *Scripture analogy* is the next thing to be regarded; for the features of already accomplished predictions form no unimportant criteria by which to judge both of other prophecies that have been accomplished, and of

sueh as still remain to be fulfilled; insomueh, that no judieious expositor will rejeet their aid, or undervalue their eountenance. And, lastly, we have mentioned *strict impartiality*: for if we sit down and devise a system of interpretation, and then bring the "dark sayings" of propheey to support and illustrate its various parts, we shall be sure to err, and spend our powers in rearing a baseless and visionary fabrie.

The dispositions of mind that should aecompany the study of propheey, are modesty, spirituality, and eatholieism. *Modesty*, beeause prophecy is an obseure and difficult subjeet, never understood to perfeetion but in its eventual fulfilment; and, therefore, the very nature of it refleets, upon the seanty powers of our finite minds, sueh a shade of insignifieanee as should render our eonelusions in referenee to it very humble and unpretending. No less importance attaches to *spirituality* in the investigation of prophetie truth; for the mind that is not deeply tinetured with the essential heavenliness of the Christian system, eannot be morally fitted to take a eorreet view of its

more recondite peculiarities. And, finally—for we cannot enlarge on these particulars—a spirit of *catholicism* is absolutely requisite to the unprejudiced consideration of the subject; because party-spirit, and the contracting influence of preconceived opinions, must necessarily generate a partial mode of inquiry, diametrically opposed to the discovery of truth. With humility to preserve the balance of the judgment—spirituality to trim the sail of the affections—and catholicism to stem the torrent of private prepossession—the mind, otherwise qualified by literary and intellectual attainments, may advance to the study of the prophetic pages, and the comparison of them with occurring events, and find, if not the ample satisfaction which it seeks, at least a pleasing and healthful exercise in the wide fields of prophetic anticipation, which stretch in prospect towards that blissful region so beautifully depicted by Isaiah: "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither

for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."—lx. 18, 19, 20.

If *all* of the foregoing qualifications be indispensable to the interpretation of the prophetie parts of Seripture, that circumstanee alone must suffiee to show, that the duty of fully examining, solving, and applying the several parts of their eomplicated maehinery, cannot be of universal obligation. All men eannot be ealled to a work for whieh all are not adapted, and for whieh even Divine graee, in its ordinary operations, furnishes only the moral, and not the seientifie elements of adaptation. The Editor of the Morning Watch seems, on this subjeet, to be quite of the same opinion with ourselves. He says, "Of the *human* means for

interpreting prophecy, a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language is the most important."* Again, "An extensive acquaintance with the manners and customs of the ancients is necessary for understanding the argument and line of thought in the prophets, which would be often unintelligible to an European reader, without this acquaintance."† And further, "Natural history, also, in its most extensive sense, must be studied by him who would fully understand the prophecies."‡ Now, it is evident that comparatively few individuals have the accomplishments here required. The peculiar study of prophecy must, therefore, belong to men whose piety is combined with learning, and leisure, and the very valuable accompaniment of "a sound mind." The union of such qualifications as these, prayerfully and sedulously directed to the elucidation of just principles of prophetic interpretation, would, we doubt not, issue in more consistent views of the subject than have yet been presented to the Christian world; and might have a happy influence in staying the ravages which

* Morning Watch, vol. i. p. 6. † P. 7. ‡ P. 8.

those "brothers in the study of unfulfilled prophecy"* are daily committing, by their unprecedented and most dreadful mangling of the sacred text. We refer to the *modern prophets.*

These gentlemen are well known as the supporters of a system of interpretation, which attaches to all the symbolical representations of millennial and heavenly glory, the gross ideas of literal, mundane felicity. Their view of the reign of Christ on earth is that of a personal and local reign:—their notions of the New Jerusalem are those of an earthly city, with substantial walls and bulwarks;—and their anticipations of a heaven of purity, peace, and everlasting joy, are characterized by every attribute of pure materialism. Human nature, the same in all ages, has ever been pleased with images of earthly gratification. The untutored Indian sends his wingless and unpractised imagination to range in fields beyond the contracted sphere of his actual observation, and there to frame a future heaven "behind the cloud-topt hill." The Mohammedan, at-

* Morning Watch, p. 592.

tached to sensual indulgences, pictures to himself a paradise of such delights as are congenial with his corrupt appetites. And the same predilection for terrestial scenes has prompted the too successful effort to educe, from the symbols of the inspired volume, materials for the framework of a heaven, in which the sense of vision is to be delighted, if not overpowered, by the dazzling coruscations of seeptres, crowns, and all the splendid regalia of that dignity with which the saints are to be palpably invested at the coming of the Lord. It is not possible, in the compass of a few pages, to exhibit the minutiæ of this scheme of everduring temporalities; neither have we inclination to contend against it in its several incongruous parts: let it suffice, that we unveil its nature by the application of a few enlightened principles, which may serve to show the folly and danger of adopting it.

The indictment which a love of truth and justice requires us to prefer against the advocates of the personal reign, must, we are sorry to say, have reference to themselves, as a body, as well as to their system. It consists of

three principal counts, which comprise the most important grounds of objection to their sentiments: namely, first, that their theory is carnal in its nature; secondly, that it fosters arrogance of spirit; and, thirdly, that it paralyzes exertion for the spiritual benefit of mankind. These charges must be substantiated:—not because we have any pleasure in casting the stone of censure, but because we feel that the interests of that spiritual reign, whose boundless extension and prosperity are the objects of our paramount desire, may, in an humble measure, be subserved by this attempt to point out the inconsistencies of the millenarian hypothesis.

We proceed, then, to the consideration, that the theory of the new prophets is *carnal in its nature.* If this be proved, it ought to form an irresistible and sufficient argument against it; for if it be carnal, it must be hostile to truth, hurtful in its tendencies, and dangerous in its effects. The word carnal (σαρκικὸς) is used in the New Testament to denote what is earthly, corporeal, physical, and material, as well as fleshly, in the sense of corrupt, and human,

in the sense of imperfection. It is always employed in contradistinction to that which is incorporeal, and which relates to the mind, or the nature of celestial existences. In applying the term carnal to our subject, we, of course, take it in its most refined acceptation; still, however, it is earthly in opposition to heavenly, material in opposition to immaterial, and gross in opposition to spiritual.

The two constituent parts of human nature, the soul and body, are equally essential to the perfection of its well-being, as a whole. The creative goodness and providential care of our Heavenly Father have taught us to value both; and his infinite grace has provided for the redemption of both. At the same time, the word of God teaches us to make a comparative estimate of their importance; and instructs us, not only by precept, but by the revelation of our ultimate destiny in the world of spirits, to affix an unutterably greater value to the immortal principle within, than to the corruptible tabernacle in which it is enshrined. This scale of judgment harmonizes with the divine origin, intelligent properties, and undecaying

element of the soul; but it by no means accords with the natural views and feelings of fallen, sinful man, who is ever disposed to think lightly of that species of happiness in which his earthly condition and bodily sensations are not prominently advantaged. This is one chief cause of the general disaffection which the glorious Gospel of the blessed God has met with in all ages of the world. Men of honest, unsophisticated minds, though destitute of the life of God in their souls, have clearly perceived that the great mass of evidence concerning the blessedness of the redeemed, has reference to their future invisible state, in a region remote from this material universe, and their want of faith has made them despise the announcements of a felicity so essentially spiritual and untangible. The promises of godliness, as pertaining to the life that now is, though they are abundantly explicit, and calculated to meet every temporal exigency and distress, have appeared to them, in comparison of the effulgence of those declarations which relate to the heavenly world, but as the twinklings of a satellite around the full-orbed disc of some

lovely planet. Thus the neglect of the higher advantages of Christianity, on account of their pure and unearthly complexion, has involved the loss of all the present benefits of a religious life. This only proves the light in which the general strain of inspired prediction is viewed by those who judge candidly, without being warped by attachment to a system.

That the figurative descriptions of the heavenly word should have a significance so pure and sublime as to revolt the man of pleasure, and the votary of sense, has been considered by some weak-minded persons as attributable—not exclusively to a moral defect in the individual who rejects revelation, but, in great measure, to the views commonly entertained respecting the final glory of the church, and the everlasting happiness of the redeemed. An impression of this kind has led to the modern revival of those ideas of a personal reign which first originated in the worldly spirit of the Jews. That spirit was transferred from Judaism to Christianity, by some of the Jewish converts who embraced the doctrines of the Apostles; and thence arose the Millenarian

scheme, subsequently propagated by weak and credulous men, who scrupled not to put a carnal construction upon the matter of apocalyptic revelation.*

The Jews, under their own economy, were continually expecting a temporal Messiah; and it is apparent in the instance of the twelve Apostles of our Lord, that this national prejudice was a formidable barrier to their entertaining just views of the Gospel. They expected that his kingdom was to be introduced with outward pomp, surpassing that of any

* Cerinthus, one of the earliest heretics, who was by birth a Jew, was the first who broached the doctrine of a literal chiliastic reign of Christ on earth. The same idea is found in the apocryphal writings ascribed to Barnabas and Hermas; it was adopted by Papias, during his visit to the eastern churches; and was also in part held and propagated by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, and the Montanists; but received a complete check by the opposition of two of the most learned men in the ancient church, Origen and Jerome. It continued longest in the African church, the fruitful soil of enthusiasm and superstition; and has only been since heard of occasionally, as striking events have excited religious attention, or men of lively imagination, but of feeble and indiscriminating judgment, have become its avowed and public advocates.

monarch in the world; and understanding the prediction (Mal. iv. 5) in its *literal* sense, they vainly anticipated that Elijah would re-appear in person, as his illustrious forerunner, to usher in his speedy and glorious enthronement. The same false expectations influenced Salome to present a petition on behalf of her two sons, that they might enjoy the most distinguished places of power and patronage during the approaching *personal reign* of their Lord. To a similar cause it was owing, that when Peter was informed of the coming sufferings of his Master, "he rebuked him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." As if he had said, Thou, who art come to be our Deliverer, to ascend the throne of David, to wield the sceptre of Judah, and to reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before thine ancients, gloriously—shalt not thus be betrayed to a cruel and ignominious death! And so strong was the hold which this favourite idea had upon the minds of Peter and his brethren, that they needed to be told of those sufferings again and again, and would scarcely listen to what they deemed so incompatible with that

earthly dignity on which their hearts were set with all the tenacity which the fondest hopes could inspire. Nor did the death of their beloved Master quench, in their spirits, the flame of worldly ambition; for no sooner had he risen from the dead, and fully convinced them of his triumph over the grave, than—forgetting the forty days' instructions they had just received concerning the nature of his kingdom—they resumed the anxious inquiry, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

It is of importance that we consider what degree of countenance or sanction these notions of an earthly kingdom met with in the declarations of Christ and his apostles. Did our Lord ever inform his disciples, that, though they had mistaken the period of his personal reign, yet that, in regard to the ultimate fact, they were perfectly correct? Did he not rather reprove, with peculiar severity, the spirit which prompted such an idea? Nothing can more forcibly evince his absolute disapprobation of it, than such a rebuke as the following, from the lips of Him whose words were ordinarily characterised

by unparalleled tenderness, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Mark, also, his express avowal before the tribunal of Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world." He did not, indeed, hesitate to assert his kingly character, "Thou sayest that I am a king"—an expression which, in eastern phraseology, amounted to a confirmatory acknowledgment;—"to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," namely, the truth of my character, and claims as the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, and the King of Zion. And here we must be excused a momentary digression from our precise line of argument, in order to notice the astonishing temerity of a late writer, in putting forth an assertion, that the Lord Jesus Christ has not yet attained unto his kingly office—that he has been anointed to the mere *name* of king, without truly assuming his kingly character—and that, in respect of his throne, "*as yet he has none.*"* Brethren,

* Morning Watch, No. VII. p. 520.

"let no man deceive you with vain words." Our Lord and Saviour is truly king, and "he ruleth by his power for ever;" for unto *the Son* he saith, "*Thy throne*, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of *thy kingdom*." "And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS." Be not ye, then, joined unto the people who "imagine a vain thing," and who "take counsel against the Lord, and against" the kingly dignity of "his Anointed." Remember who hath said "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion;" and dare not to withhold your "kiss" of allegiance and fidelity from "the Son" in his regal capacity, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

But to return. Although our Lord refrained not from asserting his authority, notwithstanding the high-priest had charged him with blasphemy for so doing, yet he pointedly declared, "but now is my kingdom not from hence," i. e. not of this world, not earthly in its principles, nor terrestrial in its character. On

the other hand, the whole tenour of his instructions had reference to his kingdom, as beginning in heavenly principles, and consummating in a heavenly state. He told his disciples to rejoice that their names were written *in heaven;* exhorted them to lay up treasure *in heaven;* and promised them a great reward *in heaven.* And what can we find in the Gospels to oppose to such explicit testimonies of the spiritual nature of our Redeemer's kingdom? We may, probably, be referred to the words of Jesus on another occasion: "Verily, I say unto you, That ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Now we have here a prophetic announcement, which, if understood *figuratively*, will be found to harmonize perfectly with the plain language of our Lord in the judgment-hall; but if interpreted *literally*, would convey the intimation of a fact at total variance with the statement alluded to. No explanation, excepting what sophistry may be ingenious enough to devise, can make these two passages

accord in sentiment, without the application of just principles of prophetic interpretation to the one which alone is susceptible of such an application ; and since it cannot reasonably be denied, that prophecy, though not entirely figurative, yet abounds with significant images and symbols, it ought assuredly to be conceded, that when unity and consistency demand it, the figurative sense should be regarded as conveying the mind of the Divine Inspirer. Hence we infer, that the glory of our Lord's kingdom upon earth is the very reverse of that which distinguishes the reign of temporal princes—that it consists, not in outward splendour, but in the universal diffusion and intensive operation of divine principles—and that the manifestation of these principles reflects a transcendent honour on the Saviour, in the view of unfallen angels, and of those ransomed myriads whose renovated spirits are capable of estimating a glory too much despised by short-sighted and carnal men, but which, in comparison of all sublunary grandeur, may justly be denominated "the glory that excelleth." And in reference to the resplendent

thrones of judgment promised to the twelve apostles, we regard the purport of that prophetic language to be, that honour far exceeding their highest hopes and wishes (which extended not beyond the possession of a seat at the right hand, and at the left of the throne,) was in reversion for them, as faithful and devoted followers of their Lord. These explanations are given merely to show how clear these passages stand of any thing like collision, when placed in their respective attitudes—the one of simple affirmation, and the other of predictive representation.

When our Lord was about to deliver that affecting series of communications to his disciples, in the course of which he broke to them the intelligence of his approaching departure, and assured them that they should find, in the Holy Ghost whom he was about to send, a monitor, a guide, and a comforter, he began by chiding their anxiety respecting the future, in these memorable words: "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and then he opened to them, at once, a fund of the most consolatory

anticipation: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This is a familiar, yet beautiful description of heaven. It is our Father's house—our home; and thither we are to be received; and thither the believers who shall "remain," after the rest are "fallen asleep," are to be fetched by our Lord in person, at his second advent. But is there any intimation that this house of our Father is to come down to us?—that the place prepared for us will descend to receive us? It is evident, that the abode into which we are to be received is the same "whither our forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." And where is that locality? It is "within the vail," Heb. vi. 19, 20. The descent of the New Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 2. admits not of a literal interpretation without involving a strange confusion of ideas.* It is a symbolic repre-

* The incongruities connected with the Millenarian scheme, are presented, in a striking point of view, in

sentation of the future glory of the church, as of a beautiful city, with golden streets and gates of pearl, and foundations of precious stones; but the mind which looks not beyond those costly and visible materials, by which the subject is pictured to our view in the language

the following extract from a discourse by the Rev. Andrew Reed on the final judgment: "The Saviour, they say, is to come, not so much 'for judgment as for residence.' This residence is to be 'real;' it is to be 'corporeal;' it is to be 'spiritual.' It is to be 'visible' and 'invisible.' It is to be 'visible at first'—'visible at times'—'visible always.' His presence is to be 'local,' but it is 'to fill the wide circle of the earth.' 'His feet are to stand on Mount Olivet;' he is 'to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem;' and he 'may be present to the closet of each particular saint.' His city, the seat of his government, is to be 'at Jerusalem,'—it is to be 'in the air.' The world 'is to be changed;' it is 'not to be changed;' it is to be 'changed partially.' The wicked are to be "destroyed;' a 'remnant of the wicked is to remain.' The saints are 'to live a thousand years;' 'the saints are to be born, and suffer, and die as now.' There are to be 'two resurrections;' there is to be 'one judgment'—there are to be 'two judgments'—there are to be 'three' judgments!"

To any of our readers who may wish to arrive at just and settled conclusions on these points, we urgently recommend the above sermon as a masterpiece of philosophical and scriptural argument.

of prophecy, forms far too mean an estimate of its sublime and glorious peculiarities. The place to which our Lord directed the hopes of his disciples, is called by them, in their subsequent writings, "a better country, even an *heavenly;*" "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved *in heaven:*" and the fact of our great High Priest and exalted Mediator's having "passed into *the heavens*" is urged upon us as a motive to perseverance, Heb. iv. 14; and an incentive to spirituality of affection, Col. iii. 1, 2.

The period of our Lord's second advent is a point of main importance to the question of his residence on earth. Peter, in his sermon to the Jews, Acts iii. 21, referred to that period. "Whom," said he, "the heaven must receive," or retain, ἄχρι χρόνων, rendered, in our translation, "*until the times* of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." We wish not to insist on the rendering of δέξασθαι, to *retain*, although it has the authority of Wetstein and other able critics, because the difference is not of essential moment in any

point of view. The scope of the passage depends greatly, however, on the signification of ἄχρι, an adverb which properly indicates the duration, and not the termination of a thing. Thus it is employed, Luke iv. 13: "He departed from him (ἄχρι καιροῦ) *for* or *during* a season;"—Acts xiii. 11: "Not seeing the sun (ἄχρι καιροῦ) for a season;"—Acts xx. 6: "and came to them to Troas (ἄχρις ἡμερῶν πεντε) *in the course of* five days." It is used in the same sense by Paul, Rom. xi. 25: ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθη, "*While* the fulness of the Gentiles is entering;"—and Heb. iii. 13: "Exhort one another daily, (ἄχρι) *while* it is called to-day." The passage under consideration should, therefore, be rendered, "Whom the heaven must receive DURING the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began." These "*times* of restitution" are generally considered to be the day of judgment and the end of the world. If the original word had been καιροὶ, there might have been some shadow of an argument for this construction of the passage, καιρὸς signifying the *season*

or *opportunity* that is appointed for the execution of any particular work; still the plural form of the word would clog this interpretation. But the word made use of by Luke is χρόνος, which denotes a long and indefinite period of time, and cannot be applied to the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, and the end of the world, as the transition from the one to the other of these is uniformly represented as short and sudden. These "times" then fill up the space between Christ's first and his second coming. The "all things" spoken of by the prophets as to be restored by the Messiah, unquestionably refer to the present state, and this restitution is carrying on *during* the present period of Christ's exaltation. During this interval the Gospel is preached unto all nations for the obedience of faith; it triumphs over idolatry, superstition, and infidelity; Gentile sinners are brought into the church of God, and taught to worship him in spirit and truth; the Jews are restored from their dispersion and unbelief:—in a word, the children of God, which are scattered abroad, are gathered into one; and when the whole of the redeemed

shall have been brought back from the servitude of Satan, and reinstated in the kingdom of God, then shall the heaven again disclose the Saviour whom it has received, and the restitution be complete.

When we reflect on the great design of Christianity, as directed to the end of raising mankind from what is earthly to what is divine, from what is sensual to what is spiritual, from what is grovelling to what is elevated, it seems surprising that individuals should be found who recognise that design, and yet endeavour to extract from its sacred records the materials of a system calculated to nurture a worldly spirit, and to fix the affections on things "seen and temporal," rather than on those which are "unseen and eternal." It matters little to insist that the earth is to be refined and renovated; still it is this identical earth; and we cannot possibly look upon it with the same holy indifference if we expect it to be our permanent abode, as if we believe with the Apostle Peter, that "all these things shall be dissolved:" nay, indifference, in that case, could not have the attribute of holiness; it

would be rather sinful to think lightly of a world, which, instead of being doomed to perish by fire, should be the destined sphere of the Redeemer's personal reign, and the final portion of the "just made perfect," for ever. We are warranted, then, in the assertion, that the theory of a literal chiliasmus is carnal in its nature. And do we need any incentive to cleave unto the dust? Do we naturally sit so loose in our attachment to this earth, that it may safely be arrayed in such prospective charms as tend to heighten its present attractions?

But we have mentioned a second ground of objection to this theory, viz.—*that it fosters arrogance of spirit.* Let this be shown to be the case. We premise, that scriptural views of "the glory that shall be revealed" have an elevating and refining influence upon the powers of the soul, but not the remotest tendency to intoxicate the imagination or overpower the judgment. The Apostle Paul, when taking a retrospective view of the vision with which he had been privileged, when he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable

words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter," scarcely knew whether he had been in the body at the time, for he doubted whether his physical energies could have sustained the impression of glory so transcendent; but not for a moment did the celestial manifestation bewilder his consciousness into oblivion of what he was in himself, or of what he was in relation to him whose Divine Majesty had been disclosed to his view. No! it belongs to the gross and fermenting qualities of the modern Millenarian theory so to affect the imagination of its votary, "that his dizzy brain, in this weak, sin-possessed, and corruptible prison-house of the flesh, shall reel and stagger into maze and confusion, *not distinguishing himself from the Holy One of God.*"* We know not to which of the modern prophets this awful sentiment is attributable; but truly, whoever may have penned it, the Editor of the journal in which it appears has cause to weep in secret for the guilt that attaches to him for admitting it into his pages.

But our charge rests not on an isolated

* Morning Watch, p. 504.

extract. The bloated features of pride are seen in almost every page of their writings. "I know not," says one, "why we should not *rule the stars* and their systems, and preside over their politics too."* Again: "For I maintain, that when all the testimony of the word of God, upon this or any other point, establishes such or such a probability and invalidates its contrary; then, inasmuch as *we possess the knowledge of all things*, and possess no more than that probability, that probability is a truth."† "But," says another, "in our witness *we are able to go farther than Christ went*, for this reason: that in the days of his flesh, the mortality of flesh, and sin in flesh, and the principalities and powers of darkness, therein holding their throne and revelry, were not yet conquered, condemned, and openly made a show of."‡ And again: "If the church be Christ's functionary, through which to express a manifestation of every attribute which he possesseth, then is it to be expected, that there should also be found in the church *an order of*

* Morning Watch, No. VII. p. 504.

† Ib. p. 507. ‡ Ib. p. 633.

men to use Christ's eyes with Christ's heart."* Page upon page of quotation might be multiplied in proof of the presumptuous spirit which prevails among the prophetical sect; but the above exhibitions are enough to make every sober mind devoutly exclaim, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their *assembly*, mine honour, be not thou united:" for in their pride they are lifted up, and in their self-conceit they speak wickedly! That men professing the slightest degree of Christian principle or feeling should speculate about ruling the stars; assert that they know all things; boast of being able to do more than Christ did; and arrogate to themselves the exercise of his attributes and bodily organs—is a fact too heart-sickening to admit of our dwelling on it longer than is needful for our purpose, namely, to caution the yet uninfected mind against a set of opinions, which are clearly demonstrated by the foregoing specimens to be analogous in their effects to those symptoms of lunatic affection, under the influence of which the disordered brain of the

* Morning Watch, p. 653.

patient is possessed with the idea, that he is a nobleman, a king, a demi-god, or perhaps no less a being than the Jupiter of the heathens.

But these are some of the grosser forms of spiritual arrogance, from which, we doubt not, many advocates of the new prophetic scheme revolt as much as we can do. It has, however, come within our notice in its milder exhibitions—and it is unlovely still, under every modification. If persons happen to be in company with strangers of that school, and the subject of prophecy become matter of discussion, provided they listen to the modern scheme with attention and becoming deference, all is well; but should any individuals venture to contend a point, and prove a little stronger in argument than was expected, the die is cast—"the Spirit speaks not in them;" they are "clear-headed men;" "first-rate doubters;" "forswearers of decision;" "boasters of want of faith;" "muffled tongues;" "men of sleek speech;" "men of clear understanding, but little faith;" "low" and "lethargic."* Of course decorum does not allow the verbal appli-

* Morning Watch, p. 341.

cation of epithets which appear sufficiently ungracious in print; but the conclusion of the mind is evinced by a quick transition from the warmth of debate to the frigidness of silence and reserve, and the hopelessness of making any converts to the personal reign in that quarter seals up their lips, not only from the contestable matter of prophetic interpretation, but from discourse about those weightier themes on which fellow-believers should delight to converse, smoothing down, in such sweet communion, those little asperities of feeling which too often arise from differences on points of minor importance.

Young persons who unhappily become tinctured with this dogmatical spirit are peculiarly entitled to our sympathy and forbearance. That which is newly discovered, or revived with some degree of éclat, finds an almost involuntary advocate in the fervid and excitable temperament of youth. The thought of living for ever in a world, which—notwithstanding all the sage reflections of sires and grandsires—appears to them a scene of much beauty and promised delight, is fraught with an

imposing charm; and the additional consideration that the earth is to be purified, and made still more lovely than it is at present, gives a finished colouring to their sanguine expectations. They are taught, by certain oracles, to regard an opposite sentiment as unbelieving; and unbelief is admitted, by all who bear the Christian name, to be a sin of enormous magnitude: hence, they pity, censure, and at length condemn, in loud and sweeping terms, those acquaintances and friends who do not agree with them in looking for the immediate coming of the Lord to reign on earth. If any such individuals as we are describing should glance at these pages, they will not find us vehement in our accusation of them for a fault which, at their age, and under their circumstances, admits of so much extenuation. We have, however, one thing to say to them in the way of advice. A very prevalent opinion is abroad, that some of them, who, by most commendable diligence, have acquired a small degree of acquaintance with the original languages of Scripture, are prone to make an unseemly display of this acquirement, by

impugning the English translation of any passage in the Bible that seems to militate against the opinions which they are so zealous to propagate. Now, we are perfectly aware that our English Bible, though, upon the whole, a fair and faithful representation of the originals, and decidedly one of the best extant, is, in some instances, susceptible of considerable amendment, which it would even demand at the hand of some devout scholar, if there were not almost too great a risk of failure in the due proportions of critical acumen and conscientious fidelity requisite for such an undertaking. Nevertheless, we must be allowed to protest, that the offices of biblical criticism and correct re-translation ought not to be invaded by the mere smatterer in Hebrew and Greek. Not that there is the slightest occasion for our young friends to be ashamed of their attainments in these branches of biblical study; on the contrary, they form an honourable and useful source of recreation; and we rejoice to know, that even the odious epithet of "blue stocking" has lost its native opprobrium, and, with it, the power of detaining our fair sisters

from the fields of linguistical and scientific pursuit. But whilst we commend the legitimate exercise of that species of knowledge which may be made to conduce exceedingly to personal edification and the furtherance of devotional feeling, it cannot be allowed, without just reprobation, that mere novices should throw down the gauntlet on the plains of controversy, or arrogate to themselves the prize in the arena of critical disputation.

Finally, we have to notice, that the Millenarian theory *paralyses exertion for the spiritual benefit of mankind.* This is a grave charge; but we do not expect that it can be disputed, because it lies in the very nature of the system to produce the effect described, and this has been proved by the conduct of some of its adherents, both in the public and private walks of life, who were once "zealous of good works," but are become not only comparatively inefficient themselves, but the bitter and sarcastic revilers of the religious institutions of the day. We affirm, that the principle of inertion lies in the very nature of the system itself; for, if the world be incapable of spiritual cultivation, why

be at the pains to scatter the seed of the kingdom? If sinners are not to be converted, but destroyed, why send missionaries to preach, in heathen lands, "the unsearchable riches of Christ?" If infidelity must inevitably prevail, why put in operation the diversified machinery that is directed to its overthrow? Accordingly, it cannot be deemed surprising, that persons who live in hourly expectation of the visible coming of Christ, should be absorbed in vain dreams, and give evidence, in their own deteriorated characters, of the withering influence of such a mistaken anticipation. The erroneous nature of their creed, in this particular, is most convincingly proved by its tendencies to blight their sensibilities, contract their liberality, and restrain the former actings of their benevolence; for if the views which they cherish were congenial with real prosperity of soul and genuine love to the cause of Christ, these individuals would be more alive than others to the importance of disseminating the Bible, preaching the Gospel, "in season and out of season," and nerving every evangelical society with fresh vigour to prosecute its object to the utmost

possible extent, during the little inch of time that remains for plucking sinners as brands from the burning. But it is far otherwise,—and why? Because effects must correspond with the quality of their procuring cause; and, therefore, false principles must be expected to fail of producing beneficial consequences. Faith, when it is fixed on a right object, is a principle of life, and energy, and effort. It is speculation that abstracts, and torpifies:—speculation too, on a subject, in reference to which its exercise should be characterised by extreme caution and modesty; for our Lord has said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put *in his own power*." But even though the times and seasons were matter of certain and infallible knowledge, they ought not so to engross our thoughts as to sap the springs of our activity, and render us mere idle gazers. Sinners are dying around us of a moral pestilence; and should we sit by their bed-sides, and amuse them with the relation of our dreams? Rebels, in arms against Jehovah, are madly rushing against the thick bosses of his buckler; and should we foolishly

tell them to look for "new heavens, a new earth," and for the visible descent of the New Jerusalem from above, and not rather warn them to "flee from the wrath to come," and to "repent and to be converted," that their sins may be blotted out? Multitudes are "perishing for lack of knowledge;" and should we clasp our hands, cast our eyes to the ground, and sit in pining sadness, giving utterance to prophetic forebodings of the judgments that are speedily coming upon the earth? On the contrary, a consideration of the actual state of the world should check every vain imagination, rouse to sedulous exertion, and prompt to the most active and influential measures for promoting the knowlege of a Saviour *already come*, that when he shall appear the second time, we may not be found to have wasted the substance intrusted to us, or hid our talent in a napkin woven in the prophetic loom.

We say not that believers in the personal reign are men "of one idea," but they are, for the most part, men of *one subject;* and that is permitted so to concentrate their powers of

sentiment and action, that in religion they think of nothing else, speak of nothing else, and move in a confined sphere of mental association, beyond which the extensive range of doctrinal and practical truths contained in the volume of Revelation, and which are more immediately connected with the *present* interests of the soul, have in their view so little attraction, that if we insist on their primary importance, our words seem to them "as idle tales." But though they believe us not, it is nevertheless true, that the atonement, imputation of sin, righteousness by faith, the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, mediatorial intercession, communion with God, practical holiness, humility, spirituality, and other marks of Christian character; the spread of divine truth, the conversion of sinners, the joy of angels, the satisfaction of the Redeemer in the reward of his sufferings, and the glory of God, as displayed in the great work of human recovery, are subjects worthy of paramount regard to that of the precise period of that blessed advent, for which those servants will be found best prepared, and in the most acceptable

waiting posture, who have the nearest resemblance to the moral image of the Lord. And this remark brings us to our last argument against the paralysing influence of these opinions, arising out of the contrary example of our Lord and his apostles. If unfulfilled prophecy had formed the principal theme of their discourses and writings, if they had spent their time and energies in abstruse contemplations, if they had thought it a sin to be serene and joyful, notwithstanding the predicted judgments that stand threatened against an ungodly world, then we must admit, that the modern prophets are a counterpart of these most exemplary models. But not so. It is recorded of Jesus, that he "went about doing good;" and his first followers went "every where" "preaching the Gospel of the kingdom." Their labours were abundant, their instructions diversified and practical, and their experience corresponded with the exhortation, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our

gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU BY ANY MEANS."

Chap. V.

ON PROFANE AND VAIN BABBLINGS.

"The mental impotence of the lunatic,
The frenzied madness of the maniac."

"Spare the men—but, oh! spare not the error," saith Edward Irving. But how can we spare the individual, whose sacrilegious tongue and pen have not spared the purity of our immaculate Saviour? All the moderation that can be gathered from reason, philosophy, and religion, are barely sufficient to keep our just indignation within the bounds we have prescribed to ourselves for the avoidance of personal severity. But as for his error, we must not, cannot spare it; nor do we dread the Goliath-like spirit on which that error rears its awful head, defies the armies of the living God, and pours forth its blasphemous utterance in words like these: "This is the human nature

which every man is clothed upon withal, which the Son of man was clothed upon withal, *bristling thick and strong with sin, like the hairs upon the porcupine.** "

If the refutation of this most hideous sentiment required us to write a pamphlet as long as the one before us, which professes to treat of " The Human Nature of Christ," we should be inclined to wish that it had fallen to the lot of another to deal with it; but our own mind has risen from the perusal of that production with such a revivified, and more than ever confirmed attachment to the doctrine of the pure unsullied humanity of our Lord, and with such an abhorrence of the subtleties and contradictions with which the contrary heretical opinion is set forth in the pages referred to, that we are persuaded an exposure of its several points will suffice, with very little comment on our part, to unveil its true character to the unmingled disgust and reprobation which it merits.

The author is surprised that any persons should be perplexed upon a subject which, to

* The Human Nature of Christ, p. 126.

his own mind, is so perspicuous: he promises, however, to reflect more upon it. We hope that these reflections may prove corrective of his present views:

"Perceiving these things clearly and distinctly in my own mind, I have reflected much within myself to discover why with many there should be so much puzzle and perplexity, not to say positive error, upon this subject: and I will continue still more to reflect upon it, that, by God's blessing, I may do my part," &c. p. 28.

The Scripture doctrine of Christ's humanity is perfectly intelligible; its sinlessness may be understood from that one word: he was "undefiled." The difficulty lies in human definitions and statements, which involve the subject in obscurity. To give one instance,—can our readers comprehend the following luminous explanation of "personality?" It is too deep for us.

"At present, from what study I have been able to give this subject, I incline to believe, that the personality is a property superinduced by God upon that community of body and soul which we inherit, being that which connects every man with Himself, as responsible to him for that common endowment of body,

and soul, and estate which he intrusts us with."—Preface, pp. ix. x.

But there are deeper things yet to be learned in this school of mysteries. We have always ignorantly imagined, that the entire person of Christ, as Mediator, consists of his two natures; but it would appear that we are "empty ones," "idle ones,"* "blunderers."† Hear the teaching which is to make us wise; it is this: the nature, or "creature-part" of Christ, was distinct from his person. He had a dead nature, and a holy person; a sinful nature, and a sinless person. Let those who know not the meaning of language, adopt, if they please, such an hypothesis, which invests our Lord with a human nature, a Divine nature, and a third something called a person, which is born into sin, and yet has no sin in it; which is not his nature or creature part, and cannot be his Divine essence. What it is, we leave our readers to discover; but lest it should be thought that here is some misrepresentation, we subjoin two or three extracts:—

"For certain, Christ had a body and soul of man's

* Human Nature, p. 13.

† Morning Watch, p. 789.

substance, without thereby having a human person: and, therefore, we can assert the sinfulness of the whole, the complete, the perfect human nature, which he took, without in the least implicating him in sin: yea, verily, seeing he subdued those properties which it had in itself, and made it holy, we assert him to be the only Redeemer of mankind from sin. I wish it to be steadily borne in mind, in reading this tract, that whenever I speak of the flesh of Christ, I mean, except when the contrary is expressed, the whole creature part, which is not a person but a substance; a substance which we must describe by its properties of sinfulness, and darkness, and deadness, in order to understand the wonderful work of redemption which Christ wrought in it. What was holy, was his person; and from that came redemption into the nature: what was powerful, was the person; and from that came strength into the nature. Sin, in a nature, is its disposition to lead the person away from God; sin, in a person, is the yielding thereto. All creation is sinful, being in a state of alienation from God: it has one law in it, the law of sin; and through all its parts this law binds it in one great sinful operation. The person of the Son of God was born into it," &c.—Preface, p. x.

" So little enlightened is the church at present upon this point, that lately one of its office-bearers, of no mean report, having charged me with heresy for saying, that the human nature which Christ appre-

hended was human nature in the fallen state, after I had meekly explained to him the difference between a nature and a person, he roundly replied to me, that he saw not any difference between Christ's taking a human nature, and Christ's taking a human person; and yet would sit in judgment upon me, his superior in the church."—p. 44.

We are told, that though our Lord is not a human person, yet he acts as a human person!

"It is necessary to observe, that Christ, though not a human person, ever acteth as a human person, within that defined sphere of creature being; and this is the meaning of his name, the Son of Man."—p. 106.

We are told that Christ, as Creator, was not infinite!

"The only meaning that can be assigned to such expressions, as that all things were made by him and for him, is, that the person of the Son—not in his absolute infinity, which I have said I even believe to be impossible, but in the finite-creature form, which he was in the fulness of time to assume, and to retain for ever and ever—did create all things, visible and invisible," &c.—p. 60.

We are told, that the human nature of Christ was impotent to good!

"I will not be prevented by stern authority from

meditating what it was that thus overwhelmed all but the piety and faithfulness of the Lord. And what was it? It was the weakness of the nature into which he had come. Its veil upon vision, its openness to temptation, its *impotence to good;* all this assailableness from without, and weakness from within, acted upon the person of Christ in human nature tempted, and constituted that contradiction to the will of God, which it was the excellent work of his life to resist and overcome."—p. 72.

We are told, that Christ's will was rebellious! (We shudder in transcribing, as will our readers in perusing the declaration.)

"But he, resolving to become a mortal man, subjected himself to all the miseries both of body and mind, which sin had brought into human nature: and, according to this, *he felt in his natural will a rebellion to the will of God* in sentiment, but never in consent, and resisted this rebellion which he felt, saying, '*I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.*'"—p. 79.

The will here spoken of as Christ's own will, in distinction from that of his Father, was not any evil principle, or sinful propensity in his mind opposing the Divine will, and striving for the ascendency. It was that will or desire in

him, as man, which naturally made him shrink from suffering. There is no moral evil in the desire of any human being, that, if it were the will of God, he might be spared the endurance of pain. But, said our Lord, I came not to gratify that perfectly sinless preference of my human inclination, but to do the will of him that sent me, by suffering, "the *just* for the *unjust*," that I may bring sinners unto God.

But, again, we are told that Christ's will needed redemption!

"The adversaries of the truth agree with us, that the will of man hath to be redeemed out of the bondage of the devil, world, and flesh; and they agree, that to effect this the Son of God took a human will; but they deny that *this will was a bond-will.* And what need, then, had it of redemption? Or how is it a redemption at all?"—p. 89.

We are also taught what is the end of the fall:—

"Furthermore, I confess myself unable to perceive how it is possible for suffering to reach an unfallen creature, without subverting the fundamental principles of the Divine purpose and administration. I do not mean the principle, how the eternal Son should consent and condescend to the suffering and humiliation; for

this indeed he doth, in the plenitude of his own Divine freedom; but the difficulty and impossibility, as I think, is, how the suffering should reach him otherwise than by a fallen body. *This is the very end of the fall, that Christ might come at suffering.*"—p. 73.

The above difficulty should be solved by the very same principle which is applied to account for the condescension of the eternal Son, *i. e.*, "the plenitude of his own Divine *freedom;*"—as it is written: "he *gave himself* a ransom for all." Accordingly, it was the gracious appointment of Jehovah, that the spotless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, rendered ineffably excellent by its connexion with the Divine nature, should be the medium, by one perfect oblation, of reconciling sinners unto himself. A sinful being suffering for sinful beings, and accepted on their behalf, would have been an anomaly in the Divine administration, which must have reflected dishonour on those attributes of God, so unitedly and gloriously illustrated in the method of redemption which is unfolded in the Holy Scriptures.

But further, we are told, that if Christ had not been possessed of a sinful nature he could not have died!

"Death, being the proper penalty of sin, the sign of God's holiness and justice upon a sinning man, is not to be reached or come at by any person, otherwise than through the way of sin. If a sinless person could die, then death would not be the sign of God's hatred of sin; for, in that case, it would without sin be inflicted. Now that Christ is a sinless person, we all admit; and how then could he reach death? . . . To reach death there is no other way but by coming in the nature of a sinful creature," &c.—p. 91.

What becomes of the doctrine of imputation? It is virtually denied in the passage just cited. We request our readers to bear in mind, that all the typical sacrifices, under the law, upon whose heads the guilt of the people was transferred in a figure, until the true atonement should be offered, were *without blemish*, vide Exod. xii. 5; xxix. i.; and no fewer than twenty similar passages. Indeed, it was expressly ordered in the ceremonial law, Lev. xxii. 20: "But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer, for it shall not be acceptable for you." And the very design of this appointment was to foreshadow the unsullied purity of Immanuel; a truth recognised by the Apostle Peter, when he referred to "the

precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb "—and not merely so, but a lamb "*without blemish*, and *without spot*."

To proceed; we are told, that Christ's nature was inclined to all those things which the law interdicted!

'If, then, Christ was made under the law, he must have been made by human nature liable to, yea, and *inclined* to, all those things which the law interdicted. When I say inclined to, I speak of his human nature in itself, apart from that Divine nature which upheld it; from that person of the Son of God, who wrought in it, and by it, the victory over all sin."—p. 10.

We are told, that Christ was troubled with evil dispositions!

"I hold it to be the surrender of the whole question to say, that he was not conscious of, engaged with, and *troubled by every evil disposition that inhereth in the fallen manhood*."—p. 111.

We are told, that Christ's soul was a fallen soul!

"That his soul descended into hell (Hades) proved it to be *a fallen soul;* that it came forth thence, proved it to be holy."—p. 31.

We are told, that Christ's flesh loved temp-

tation! A sentiment attempted, but unjustly, to be supported by the Athanasian creed.

"In such a reasonable soul, liable to temptations through the flesh, and *in such a flesh, loving the temptation*, and ever conversing with the tempter, doth the Athanasian creed declare that Christ subsisted."—p. 37.

We are told, that Christ's flesh was a middle-space, on which the world contended with the Holy Spirit.

"The flesh of Christ was the middle space, on which the powers of the world contended with the Holy Spirit dwelling in his soul. His flesh is the fit medium between the powers of darkness and the powers of light. And why fit? *Because it is linked unto all material things devil-possessed*, while it is joined in closest, nearest union unto the soul, which in Christ was God-possessed, in the person of the Holy Ghost." —p. 40.

We are told, that Christ was not separate from sinners till after the resurrection!

"I believe it to be most orthodox, and of the substance and essence of the orthodox faith, to hold, that Christ could say until his resurrection: Not I, but sin that tempteth me in my flesh; just as *after the resurrection he could say, I am separate from sinners.*"—p. 127.

One extract more, that we may learn the meaning of substitution!

"And what then? Is there no such thing as substitution and imputation? Yea, verily there is. It is substitution, that instead of the sinner proving *the extremes of God's being*, whereof he could as little sustain the holiness, as he could receive the love, God's own Son should come into his place, and bear them all, and *enable us, through substitution in his person, to bear them also.*"—p. 187.

Other equally unscriptural tenets might be produced from the same work; such as, that Christ reconciled himself;*—that he was a regenerated man; †—that he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost; ‡—that his body was corruptible; || &c. &c. But the quotations already given occupy too much space, and are sufficient to prove to a demonstration, that the error against which we are protesting, not only attaches moral contamination to the nature of the "*Holy One* and *the Just*," but strikes at the root of substitution, imputation, vicarious suffering, and, in short, every fundamental truth of the Christian religion. The doctrines

* Human Nature, Pref. p. viii. † P. 135.
‡ P. 63. || P. 75.

of the papacy are, in our apprehension, not more fearfully perverting in their character and tendencies, than such false views of the scheme of redemption: in fact, we account the "voluntary humility" of worshipping the virgin mother a sin of far less magnitude than that of casting the slur of defilement upon "that *holy* thing," which was conceived in her by the over-shadowing of "the power of the Most High."

It is true, we are frequently told, in the tract under review, that Christ was "in all things *sinless*;" and here lies the amazing inconsistency of the statements, that he should have no original sin, and no actual sin,* and yet be "laden with sinful flesh:—have a will impotent to good;—a rebellious will; a will needing redemption; a fallen soul; evil dispositions," &c. Really these contradictory assertions remind us forcibly of the line in Pope's Imitations of Horace:—

"The worst of madmen is a saint run mad.'

It might surely suffice if the monstrous forms

* Human Nature, p. 86.

of opinion, to which we have already referred, were the only instances of phantasmata occurring in the day-dreams of some modern professors of Christianity. But it is grievous to hear, in various quarters, the most wild, incoherent, and ridiculous babblings in connexion with divine subjects. We would fain put upon them the most favourable construction of which they are susceptible, and regard them as indicative of the mind's ordinary devotement to themes of highest consideration, when not under the influence of that physical derangement which occasions the utterance, or inditing of such partial, distorted, and phrenzied fragments of thought. Whoever has been accustomed to watch by the bedside of devout individuals, afflicted with a violent phrenetic affection, will be able to judge whether the following words and phrases, copied from a modern religious journal,* do not give a precise idea of the wanderings of a mind unstrung by external influence, and disabled from uniting syllables, words, and phrases, in their just and natural connexion: "Satan's fatherhood;"—"Israel

* The Morning Watch.

the mediatrix of the nations ;"—" other God-Persons ;"—" Adamhood ;"—" plural Adam ;" —" œonial dignity ;"—" œonial condition ;"— " zöopoient ;"—" Melchisedec rank ;"—" Melchisedec royalty ;"—" head-liar ;"—" super-creation-head ;" — " holder up ;" — " holder together ;"—" resurrection humanity ;"—" the ovary of the elect church ;"—" typical and antitypical modes of one and the same aggregate of energies ;" &c. &c. &c.

" These are a part; but to relate thee all
The monstrous, unbaptized fantasies,
Imaginations fearfully absurd,
Hobgoblin rites, and moonstruck reveries,
Distracted creeds, and visionary dreams,
More bodiless and hideously misshapen
Than ever fancy, at the noon of night,
Playing at will, framed in the madman's brain,
That from this book of simple truth were proved,
Were proved, as foolish men were wont to prove,
Would bring my word in doubt, and thy belief
Stagger, though here I sit and sing, within
The pale of truth, where falsehood never came."

POLLOCK.

CONCLUSION.

It is very possible that some of our readers may have followed us through the variety of topics discussed in this volume, and at the close of each chapter have congratulated themselves, that they entertain sound and scriptural views of them all, and are entirely free from the deteriorating influence of those errors which it has been our object to unveil. It is, indeed, a cheering reflection, that so many are to be found, whose minds are proof against the theoretic novelties of the day; and yet we must be permitted, with all affection and faithfulness, to say, that soundness of creed is of little worth, if the soul be destitute of the vital principle of godliness. The essence of true piety consists in a right state of moral feeling

towards God: it is love to him who first loved us; and the most correct notions respecting assurance, miracles, pardon, prophecy, and the whole range of theological tenets, would still leave the mind "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked," if unaccompanied by the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit. Let no one, therefore, substitute clearness of intellectual apprehension for a heart right in the sight of God, lest he think of himself more highly than he ought to think, and perish with those of old, whose boast it was, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." What will it avail in the day of final and solemn account to say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out demons; and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Or what will it avail to have held the purest and most unerring system of religious belief, if the denunciation of the righteous Judge should be "*I never knew you*"—i. e. never approved of you. I never saw you seek my face; never heard your voice in prayer; never felt you grasp my omnipotent arm; never found you at

my feet, sighing, weeping, supplicating, and praising; never beheld you walking in my ways; never knew you love me nor delight in me. You have acted as a stranger towards me. I never knew you as I know *my own*."
"DEPART FROM ME."

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